

DINNER AT THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT

Screenplay By

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based upon the novel by

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FIRST DRAFT
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DINNER AT THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT

UNDER CREDITS

FADE IN:

EXT. BALTIMORE STREET - DAY

A procession of late 20's automobiles, decorated with pompoms and streamers, gets ready to take off. A few have tin cans tied to the bumpers. The words, "Just Married," have been scrawled across a rear windshield.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the horns honk and the cars head down the street, residents line the block for a glimpse of the wedding party. People wave and shout to the bride and groom.

ANGLE ON POLICE CAR

as the officer, who has stepped out, stops the one car heading in the opposite direction to accommodate the procession.

EXT. WOODBINE ROAD - DAY

Small brick homes line the entire block. We favor one of these -- a simple but well-kept brick house, distinguished mainly by its flower bed out front. We can hear a woman humming.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

We see the back of a woman as she works in the garden. The horns from the wedding procession begin to be heard in the background.

CLOSE ON WOMAN

Pearl Tull, a slender thirty-year-old woman, still beautiful but with the faint beginnings of lines around her eyes, kneels in the dirt behind the frame house.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Her pinafore is a mess; perspiration rolls down her back as she weeds the garden. The sound of piano scales comes from the house next door. Pearl hums to herself.

EXT. WOODBINE ROAD - DAY

About a mile away, the procession turns onto Woodbine Road. Neighbors hear the horns and come out on their front lawns. Some peek through their front windows.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

As the sound of the horns becomes louder, Pearl's digging becomes more driven. It's obvious she's not about to run to the front of the house to see anything, much less a wedding procession.

EXT. WOODBINE ROAD - DAY

The procession slowly passes Pearl's house, where two elderly people, Bessie and Seward, stand on the stoop and wave to the wedding party.

VARIOUS ANGLES

Soon the cars pass and disappear down the street. The neighborhood people wander back inside.

CREDITS END

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Pearl's gardening has returned to a more natural pace. The sound of piano scales continues. Pearl begins to hum again.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As she reaches for the towel, around the side of the house comes a young, handsome blue-eyed stranger.

BECK TULL

twenty-four, in a loud plaid sport coat. His black hair is waved into a pompadour and his straw hat with a fancy band is pushed back. Beck carries a bunch of flowers and a Whitman Sampler box. He juggles them as he unlatches the gate.

BECK

Hello. Hello. Anyone back here?

PEARL

absorbed, doesn't hear.

ANGLE ON BECK

who spots her and crosses the yard, stopping right at Pearl's feet.

BECK
Pearl. Pearl Cody!

ANGLE ON PEARL

surprised and flustered, looks up.

PEARL'S POV - BECK UP ABOVE

BECK (Contd.)
We met this morning at church. You said it would be all right for me to call.

(smiles)
Well, I'm calling.

BACK TO PEARL

This can't really be happening. Beck puts his hand out and helps Pearl to her feet. Pearl smooths her hair which has becomingly escaped from the top knot. She desperately looks for a pocket for the towel as Beck hands her the flowers and chocolates.

BECK (Contd.)
I represent the Tanner Corporation out of Norfolk.
(then)
Emmaline introduced us.

PEARL
(assuringly)
Of course I remember. Beck Tull.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Aunt Bessie and Uncle Seward watch through the window as Pearl and Beck talk.

UNCLE SEWARD
Flowers...and candy.

AUNT BESSIE
So it would appear.

Beck turns to go and Pearl walks toward the back door. Aunt Bessie looks at Pearl, then out the window in time to see Beck disappearing down the driveway.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Aunt Bessie and Uncle Seward busy themselves at the kitchen table with the Sunday paper as Pearl enters. She puts the flowers down on the sink and starts to fill a vase.

AUNT BESSIE

Who was that, Pearl? You didn't ask him in.

Pearl turns off the water and places the flowers in the vase. Doesn't turn around.

PEARL

You'll meet him this evening. He's asked me out.

AUNT BESSIE

(disapprovingly)

Last minute...and on a Sunday night...

Pearl, carrying the vase and candy, starts toward the back stairs.

PEARL

I don't care. I'm going.

Pearl continues upstairs. From behind his paper:

UNCLE SEWARD

(to himself)

Who's stopping you?

He puts down the paper. Aunt Bessie is looking straight at him.

UNCLE SEWARD (Contd.)

For God's sake, Bessie, don't be so particular. We're never going to get her off our hands.

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM - DAY

We are close on a clock whose weights spin back and forth inside a crystal. Soon we move to other items -- photographs, powder box, music box, brush, comb and mirror set on a doily on her vanity -- and other knicknacks which will go with her throughout her life.

Pearl places the flowers on her dressing table, then has a look at herself in the mirror. She smiles, excited.

ANOTHER ANGLE

inside an open drawer is Pearl's diary. She takes it out and moves to the bed.

ANGLE ON PEARL

as she lies on her bed, writing in her diary.

PEARL (V.O.)

July 9, 1929. I went out behind the house to weed. I was kneeling in the dirt with my pinafore a mess...

EXT. THE CHARLES CLUB - NIGHT

Not bad for a Sunday night. People dressed to the nines come and go.

PEARL (V.O.)

...and over walked a very tall, very decent man. There I was, working in the garden, dirt all over my hands.

INT. THE CHARLES CLUB - NIGHT

Close on Pearl, who is dancing with Beck. She's dressed in a flowered rayon dress, with a gardenia behind her ear. As they dance, Beck is describing the wonders of the Tanner Corporation -- and himself.

BECK

Tanner has the finest line of farm and garden equipment over the entire Eastern seaboard. And their number one salesman in Northwestern Virginia is yours truly!

Pearl is happy, then reflective.

PEARL

So you're just passing through.

(beat)

How did you ever meet Emmaline?

BECK

Oh, I make sure that come Sunday morning, I'm in a town where there's a Baptist church.

PEARL

I'm Episcopalian. I just went this morning because Emmaline asked me.

BECK

Lucky for me.

The music stops, and Beck ends the dance with a flourish. Pearl starts to leave the floor but Beck continues to hold her hand. She starts to pull her hand away but Beck looks down and places his hand to hers, palm to palm.

BECK (Contd.)

You have the tiniest hands, Pearl.

Then Beck steps back and looks admiringly at all of Pearl.

BECK (Contd.)

And so refined.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Beck leads a dumbfounded Pearl over to a table.

PEARL

I can certainly see you make a good salesman.

BECK

I prefer to think of myself as someone who doesn't sell, but as someone who rediscovers.

PEARL

(humors him)

Is that so?

A waitress stops by.

BECK

How about two, tall lemonades.

(beaming)

This is a celebration.

The waitress moves away.

PEARL

You must celebrate any old thing.

BECK

(smiles)

Not any.

ANGLE ON TABLE - A WHILE LATER

The couple are well into the evening by now. Pearl is receptive to a very enthusiastic Beck.

BECK

Mr. Tanner himself told me that I'm just the kind of fellow that will go straight to the top. He's giving me the Newport News territory. All on account of the penny washers.

PEARL

(sips lemonade)

I'm not familiar with the penny washers...

The band starts up again. Beck responds quickly, takes Pearl's hand, leads her onto the floor.

ANGLE ON BECK AND PEARL

as they dance softly, oblivious to everyone else.

BECK

My company makes a garden trowel. We punch a hole in the metal to fit the wooden handle. Leaves a round, penny-sized piece of steel...thousands and thousands of them. Gonna be thrown out, but I thought, these bits of scrap aren't scrap at all.

PEARL

The music is nice.

BECK

Sure is.

(then)

It just galls me, Pearl, the way people take one look at something and think it's no good. That's my belief, give things a second chance. Why, right in front of your very eyes might be a diamond.

He looks at Pearl.

BECK (Contd.)

No wife of mine will ever want for anything.

Pearl steps back, looks seriously at Beck.

PEARL

Yes, I know.

Beck pulls her closer to him and they continue dancing.

CLOSE ON PEARL'S FACE

as she looks heavenward, as if to say, "Thank you, God."

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM - "1932" - NIGHT

A neat but tiny living room with a dining table in an alcove.

ANGLE ON FIREPLACE

Beck's and Pearl's wedding picture rests on the mantel of a fake fireplace.

ANGLE ON BECK

wearing his salesman's suit, but with his tie loosened on his Arrow shirt, sits drinking beer at the table. His sample case, emblazoned with the Tanner Corporation logo, lays on the table.

PEARL

sits across from him, mending socks. Their first-born, Cody, now two, plays with a small pair of boxing gloves. Half-size, but still far too large for a two-year-old. Beck has brought them to him.

BECK

How does Richmond sound? There's a chance it could be a move up the ladder for me.

Beck takes another sip of beer.

PEARL

That'd be five times in two years.
Can't we stay put?

BECK

Now, Pearl, this could mean a chance at a home office job. Wouldn't have to travel as much.

Pearl gets up and goes over to her sewing kit.

PEARL

Last month when Cody was so sick -- and you on the road -- where was I to find a doctor in the middle of the night. He could have died.

CODY

is struggling with the gloves. Beck looks down and lifts Cody to his lap.

BECK

(laughs)

He's fine. You just worry too damn much. Here, Cody, let Daddy do that.

He puts the gloves on his son.

CLOSE ON PEARL

who kicks right into overdrive. Panicked.

PEARL

I want more children.

BECK (O.S.)

Okay.

PEARL

You don't understand. I need some extra. One little boy just isn't enough.

BECK

is pleased and proud.

ANGLE ON PEARL

who stops knitting and reaches for a paper bag on the table, from which she removes two new picture frames.

PEARL (Contd.)

Ettinger's was having a sale. Two for one.

BECK

(smiles)

So you think the champ needs a brother. And maybe a sister, too.

(then)

All right, Pearl, my girl.

A smiling Beck places Cody on the floor to play, sets down his beer and gets up from the table. He walks over to Pearl, who still appears distraught. She's holding on to the picture frames.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Beck takes her in his arms and lifts his wife, who still holds on to the picture frames, into the air. He heads toward the sofa with Pearl giggling.

ANGLE ON MANTEL

As the two head for the sofa, they pass the fireplace, where Pearl places the picture frames beside the one of Cody. As they head out of frame --

PEARL (O.S.)

Beck!

EXT. FORT McHENRY STREET - "BALTIMORE, JULY 4, 1944" - DAY

We are close on the Tull car, a 1940 Buick. Cody is now fourteen, a handsome boy, very conscious of girls and how they view him. He wears a perfectly pressed plaid sports shirt neatly tucked into khaki pants.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Now we can see that Cody is doing the driving. Beck, his teacher, sits next to him. Beck, at thirty-nine, sports the same pompadour hairstyle and wears a salesman's type suit but without the tie.

BECK

Thatta boy, easy.

(then)

This is their first time in the car with you. We don't want to scare them.

CODY

No sweat.

ANGLE ON BACK SEAT

where the rest of the family sits. Pearl, now forty-five, wears a trouser outfit. And beside her are the "two extras" -- a boy, Ezra, and his sister, Jenny.

CLOSE ON EZRA

who is eleven and the "no trouble at all" second child. He wears a polo shirt which hangs outside his trousers. His baseball glove is on his lap and he fingers a tin whistle.

CLOSE ON JENNY

a bouncy nine-year-old, who sits on Pearl's other side. She sings Mairzy Doats as she looks out the window.

EXT. FORT McHENRY - PARK - DAY

Cody turns into a lot and parks head-on. He turns off the key, sits back and breathes a sigh of relief.

CODY

Okay, Ma, you can open your eyes now.

PEARL

My eyes are open plenty.

Cody sets the hand brake.

BECK

Good job, son.

(turns to back seat)

Pearl, you can relax now. He got us here all in one piece.

PEARL

Cody, you did just fine.

(then)

All right, children, let's see if we can find an empty table.

Everybody gets out. Cody and Beck, carrying gloves and ball, run off. Ezra and Jenny remain to help Pearl unload the car.

EXT. PICNIC AREA - DAY

Pearl and Jenny are setting out lunch on a picnic table covered with a checked cloth. Ezra fiddles with his tin whistle nearby.

ANGLE ON TABLE

Fried chicken, deviled eggs, potato salad...and cupcakes with tiny American flags set in each. Lemonade in a tall thermos. And a bottle of beer for Beck.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Jenny is excited. Looks to her mother.

JENNY

Mother, is this where Patrick Henry
lived?

(declaiming)

'Give me liberty or give me death.'

PEARL

(a real downer)

Oh, I don't think so, Jenny.

(offering)

Go ask your father.

(then)

Lunch is ready!

Jenny runs over to where Beck and Cody are playing catch. Beck bends down to listen to Jenny's question. Beck answers but we hear neither the question nor the answer. Beck takes Jenny's hand and motions Cody to come along. All walk toward Pearl.

ANGLE ON EZRA

now playing his tin whistle. He kicks an empty can and uncovers a coin in the grass. Picking it up, he looks closely at the nearby trees. He wanders back toward his mother.

EZRA

Mommy, if it turned out that money
grew on trees for just one day --
and never again -- would you let me
stay home to pick it?

PEARL

No.

EZRA

Why not?

PEARL

Because your education is more important.

EZRA

(indignant)

Other kids' mothers would let them,
I bet.

PEARL

Other mothers don't have plans for
their children to amount to something.

EZRA

But just for one day...?

PEARL

You could pick it after school. Or before. Wake up extra early. Set your alarm clock ahead an hour.

Ezra stomps his foot.

EZRA

An hour! Only one little hour for something that happens only once in the world?

PEARL

(pissed)

Ezra, will you let me be. Money on trees! The things you think of. Lunch is ready, for heaven's sake.

Beck, Cody and Jenny have witnessed the tail end of this discussion. Pearl seems to need their support.

BECK

I'd let him do it.

PEARL

What?

BECK

I said I'd let him pick all the goddamn money off the trees that he wants.

PEARL

(taken aback)

You'd want a child who was well educated.

BECK

'Til his hands bled.

ANGLE ON KIDS

They carefully witness this exchange.

PEARL

(desperate)

But without an education he couldn't get a decent job.

BECK

We're talking money on trees, Pearl. He wouldn't need one.

Apples and oranges. A long pause. Then --

PEARL
I have ham and turkey here...

EXT. PICNIC AREA - LATER - DAY

Lunch is over. Beck, in shirt-sleeves, is finishing his beer. Cody and Ezra pick up baseball gloves and start to leave the table.

BECK
Hold on, boys. I want to get a snapshot before it gets too dark.

Beck takes a camera from the picnic basket.

PEARL
Beck...I must look a mess.

BECK
Not at all.

Pearl straightens her outfit and smooths her hair.

BECK (Contd.)
All right, how about over there facing the sun with the fort in the background. Let's show the flag still flying.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Pearl stands up and walks to where we can see Fort McHenry and the American flag behind her. Ezra immediately goes to stand next to his mother. Jenny walks to the other side.

CODY
(moving toward Jenny)
Jenny, you stand in front of me.

Cody, who appears jealous of Ezra's position, puts one arm around his mother's waist and his other hand on Jenny's shoulder. Ezra stands holding his baseball glove, with Pearl's arm around his shoulders.

BECK
(whispers to himself)
One big happy family.
(beat)
Ready, one, two, three.

Click.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - "AUGUST, 1944" - DAY

A month later. Beck's car is parked out front. Beck, in suit and tie, sits on a rocker with a sample case next to him. Jenny, wearing Beck's hat, sits in his lap.

Pearl, with nails in her mouth, hammers down a loose porch step.

BECK

You remember Ed Ball used to have my territory -- he never could get into see Curt Anderson. Well, Thursday I went in there and when I walked out, I had a two-hundred seventy dollar order, net thirty days.

Pearl seems to be hammering even harder.

BECK (Contd.)

When I told Ed, he hinted there might just be an opening in the home office. That'd mean no more moving, once we got to Norfolk.

(pause)

Pearl, I don't know why you won't let me fix the porch.

ANGLE ON SIDEWALK

Cody and Ezra come up the sidewalk to the porch and greet their mother. Ezra is now playing a bamboo whistle.

PEARL

removes the nails from her mouth and kisses each boy.

THE BOYS

nod to Beck from the security of their mother's arms.

BACK TO SCENE

BECK

Pearl, did you hear anything I just said?

(he doesn't wait for a response)
Boys, you want to see what your father bought you? It's on the back seat.

Cody and Ezra run to the car. Beck smiles. Pearl seems disinterested but manages to sneak a glance in the boys' direction.

ANGLE ON CAR

Cody and Ezra both help carry an archery set in a big box from the car. They bring it onto the porch.

PEARL

The things you spend your money on.

Cody opens the box and removes the bow and arrow.

BECK

Archery isn't just a game. It's educational.

(more to boys than Pearl)

It'll teach the boys to stand up straight. Give them good posture.

EZRA

Mom, you always say, 'Stand straight, Ezra.'

The kids laugh. Beck is happy. Pearl shrugs.

EXT. NESHAMINY FIELD - DAY

Sunday afternoon with the whole family. Pearl picks dried flowers. Jenny sits buttoning and unbuttoning her sweater. Ezra chews a piece of grass and fingers his bamboo whistle.

Beck still wears his salesman's clothes with the tie loosened. He finishes nailing the target to a tree while Cody places an arrow against the bow's string.

BECK

Wait now, son. You want to do things right.

Beck crosses to where Cody stands and positions Cody.

CODY

I'll get a bull's eye on the first try.

BECK

Now, your left arm goes like this. You want to keep your wrist from getting stung, you see. And stand up straight.

(laughs)

For your mother...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Before Beck finishes his instructions, Cody lets go of the arrow which hits the side of the target and falls to the ground.

BECK

is pissed.

BECK

Did I tell you to shoot yet? Did I? I wasn't even through explaining. You never listen. I don't know why I bother...

Beck walks over to retrieve the arrow as Cody mutters loud enough to be heard.

CODY

No way it could stick in that hard tree.

CLOSE ON BECK

who picks up the arrow and jams it into a bull's eye.

BECK

Look at that. Steel-tipped. Of course it sticks. I chose that tree. Of course it sticks.

ANGLE ON PEARL

squinting from off in the distance.

PEARL

Did he hit it?

BECK

No, he didn't hit it. He never listens.

PEARL

Let Ezra try. Beck, let Ezra try.

CODY

(not happy at all)

That sissy.

Beck walks over to where Ezra has joined his brother.

BECK

All right, Ezra. Come and try. Just don't get carried away like Cody.

ANGLE OF ENTIRE FIELD - MUSIC OVER

Beck takes the bow from Cody and hands it to Ezra with another arrow. Beck instructs him. Ezra is awkward but patient, unlike his brother. Pearl and Jenny watch from a distance. Finally...

BECK
Let her fly, Ezra.

CLOSE ON EZRA

as his arrow leaves the bow.

WE FOLLOW THE ARROW

as it sails straight to the center of the bull's eye, and in the process, knocking to the ground the arrow still jammed into the tree.

BACK TO SCENE

BECK
(admiringly)
Will you look at that?

Pearl walks closer.

PEARL
(matter-of-fact)
Why, Ezra. A bull's eye.

BECK
See there, Cody. Just goes to show what happens when you follow instructions.

Cody takes the bow from Ezra and places another arrow in it. Ezra wanders to the target to get a good look at his bull's eye.

CODY'S POV

He aims at the target, then moves to some shrubbery, then to Beck's Buick and back to Ezra...where he stops.

EZRA

turns to see his brother pointing the arrow at him. He runs toward Cody.

EZRA
(yelling)
No! Stop, stop, stop! NO!

Ezra knocks Cody to the ground.

THE ARROW

leaves the bow.

CODY AND EZRA

wrestle in the grass until Cody pushes Ezra off. Both boys look up to see --

PEARL

who has fallen into Beck's arms. A circle of blood appears on the shoulder of her blouse.

Jenny hangs on Pearl's skirt, crying.

BECK

Pearl, my God. Oh, Pearl.

CODY AND EZRA

are in shock. Then --

CODY

(to Ezra)

See what you've gone and done!

Ezra runs to his mother. Cody stands up, brushes off his clothes and walks toward the car.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Pearl, her arm in a bandana sling, sits on a chair. Beck sits across the room with his Tanner case on the floor beside his feet.

BECK

I'm being transferred to Norfolk.

PEARL

Oh, Beck. We're hardly settled here, not even a year.

BECK

I know.

PEARL

I'm tired of moving. So are the children.

BECK
I'm going alone.

CLOSE ON PEARL

startled and angry.

PEARL
I don't want to be one of those
women who only see their husbands
on the weekend.

BECK (O.S.)
You won't.

It hits her.

PEARL
Why, Beck? Why?

BECK (O.S.)
(slowly)
I don't want to stay married.

ANGLE ON BECK

who looks down at his hands, like a belligerent schoolboy
waiting out a scolding.

PEARL
(lowers her voice)
Tell me, what is it?

BECK
(slowly, pausing between words)
I just told you.

PEARL
(unbelieving)
We'll sleep on it.

Beck stands and starts upstairs.

BECK
(not looking back)
I'm going tonight.

Beck exits as Pearl sits unmoving.

INT. TULL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beck has spread his clothing and toiletries across the bed.
He carefully packs them into a large suitcase.

VARIOUS ANGLES

Beck looks around the room at the furnishings, at their wedding picture, at Pearl's dresser items. He picks up the alarm clock on the night table, winds it, then places it back beside the bed. He looks out the window into the night.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beck enters quietly, sees his daughter sleeping. He walks over to her bed but doesn't touch her. He picks up a small rag doll from the floor and exits.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beck enters and does the same, taking with him an Indian arrow of Ezra's and Cody's old cap gun. He stares at the boys asleep.

INT. TULL BEDROOM - NIGHT

The kids' items, along with everything else, are visible in Beck's suitcase as he zips it shut.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pearl has turned on the table lamp but still sits in the same chair. A pot of tea has been made. She looks up to see --

BECK

come down the stairs, suitcase in hand. He crosses the room, moving toward Pearl, but only to pick up his Tanner case. Then, without saying a word, he heads for the door.

PEARL

The children, Beck. You'll want to visit the children.

Beck stops short of the front door. Turns to look at his wife.

BECK

No. I won't be visiting the children.

Pearl is stunned. Beck opens the door and pauses.

BECK (Contd.)

I am not an irresponsible person. I do plan to send you money.

PEARL

(indignant)

I'm not your wife. Never was. You're married to the Tanner Corporation.

BECK

Who are you married to, Pearl?

Beck exits and the door closes.

INT. TULL KITCHEN - "OCTOBER, 1944" - DAY

Three months later, just before Halloween. Jenny stands in the middle of the room wearing the bottom half of a Humpty Dumpty costume. The top half sits on the kitchen table. Pearl is adjusting the suspenders that hold on the bottom half.

ANGLE ON DOOR

as Cody enters, wearing a sweater tied around his waist. He carries a football and some school books.

CODY

What in God's name is that?

JENNY

(excited)

Can't you tell? I'm gonna be Humpty Dumpty for Halloween.

CODY

(to Pearl)

You oughtta make one of those for Ezra -- as cracked as he is.

PEARL

(annoyed)

Oh, Cody. Why do you have to be so hard-boiled?

CLOSE ON CODY

taken aback, not used to his mother making jokes.

JENNY

That's right, Cody.

Pearl continues adjusting the costume. Cody goes to the refrigerator, opens it, takes out a bottle of milk, and drinks right from the bottle. As he does this --

EZRA

enters and immediately walks over to his mother, giving her a big hug. He sees a costumed Jenny.

EZRA

Hey, that's really nice.

(then)

Is it time for supper?

PEARL

Jenny, we're about through. Would you put all this up in my bedroom? Ezra, you set the table.

Cody's had enough. He heads out of the kitchen, past Pearl, who goes to the refrigerator, takes out hamburger meat and begins to prepare supper.

INT. TULL KITCHEN - EVENING

Later. All are seated at the kitchen table. Ezra has set the table for five and there is one empty chair. Pearl's begins to serve dinner -- its hamburgers and mashed potatoes.

THE BOYS

start to eat.

JENNY

looks at her mother, who's hoping the inevitable won't be asked.

JENNY

Shouldn't we wait for Dad?

PEARL

No, not tonight. He'll be away all weekend...

Everyone surprises Pearl by joining in her next word --

EVERYONE

...business.

Pearl is startled, but the kids go right on eating. Then Pearl, too, begins to eat. Moments later --

ANGLE ON CODY

who can contain his disappointment no longer.

CODY

Again. But we'll miss the Colts-Giants game. Dad promised.

PEARL

Well, if it's the Colts against the Giants...I can take you.

Cody knows his mother means well. He tries not to let it show that it's just not the same.

ANGLE ON EMPTY CHAIR

as everyone continues their dinner.

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pearl, wearing a nightgown and robe, puts the finishing touches on the Humpty Dumpty costume. She places it on a hanger and puts away her sewing machine. Pleased with her work she leaves the room, carrying the costume.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pearl quietly opens the door. A night-light glows. Jenny is sound asleep.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Pearl hangs the costume on the door hook but changes her mind and carefully hangs it on the edge of the closet door, where her daughter will see it first thing when she wakes. As Pearl starts to leave Jenny's room, the phone in the hallway rings.

INT. TULL UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Pearl is quick to answer, catching the phone just after the first ring.

PEARL

Hello? Hello? Who is it?
(nothing)
Beck? Hello?

Pearl puts down the receiver and heads toward her bedroom.

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pearl removes her robe, places it on a chair and sits on the edge of her bed. She looks over at Beck's empty side and remains seated.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Pearl gets up and goes to the bureau for her purse. The Fourth of July picture has been framed and sits on top of the bureau next to her girlhood momentos.

CLOSE ON ENVELOPE

Pearl removes an envelope from her purse, slits it open and removes a check. She looks inside for a note. It's empty. The check is placed back in her purse, which is closed and put back on the bureau.

ANGLE ON DRESSING TABLE

Pearl sits down at her dressing table with the envelope, opens the drawer, takes out her address book and opens it to a page where she carefully copies Beck's newest address. Then she replaces the book, closes the drawer, and opens another drawer where she places her husband's envelope on top of several others.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Pearl returns to her bed, but before she can get in she hears a noise from downstairs. Putting on her robe, she exits the bedroom.

INT. TULL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ezra is closing the refrigerator door, sandwich in hand. He sees his mother.

EZRA

(eating)

Night, Mom.

He leaves the kitchen. Pearl tidies Ezra's sandwich makings, then checks the kitchen door and windows. She looks out the window over the sink.

PEARL'S POV

the empty yard, the neighbor's house, the road under the street lamp.

BACK TO SCENE

Suddenly we hear a loud crash from upstairs. Pearl shrieks.

INT. CODY'S & EZRA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It is dark. The overhead light snaps on and Pearl, wielding a baseball bat, stands in the doorway. Jenny, in nightclothes and carrying a stuffed rabbit, is right behind her.

PEARL

Good Lord, what happened?

ANGLE ON BOYS

From his bed, Cody stares at his mother with a sleepy expression. Ezra's bed has collapsed and he has disappeared into the bedclothes on the floor.

PEARL (Contd.)

(with concern)

Ezra...honey...

Pearl lays the bat down on the floor and sees magazines scattered all around Ezra's bed.

CLOSER

They are open to pictures of women in garter belts, black lace brassieres -- or in nothing whatsoever.

PEARL

picks one up and is astonished at what she sees.

PEARL (Contd.)

Ezra Tull!

EZRA

peers over the edge of the bed and for the first time sees the magazines.

PEARL (Contd.)

(dropping magazine)

What a disappointment. I never suspected you would be such a person.

Before Ezra can reply, Pearl turns and exits, pulling Jenny with her.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra immediately emerges from his bed and jumps on Cody. He grabs a handful of hair and shakes Cody's head.

EZRA
I hate your guts!

CODY
(teasing)
You don't love your brother?
Now be a good little boy.

Cody finally manages to knock Ezra off, who begins to sob.

CODY
(a tinge of guilt)
Oh, c'mon.

ANGLE ON CLOSET - MUSIC OVER

Cody gets up and goes to the closet. He shows Ezra where he'd stashed the slats.

ANGLE ON BED

Together they fit them into place, then heave the mattress back on the frame and smooth out the bedclothes. Ezra takes a good look at one of the magazines and begins to giggle.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - NIGHT

The light in the boys' room stays on for a moment, then goes out.

INT. CITIZEN'S BANK - DAY

Pearl, wearing a WAC-style hat, stands before a teller's window. She removes a check from her purse, uses the pen on the counter to endorse it, and hands it to the teller.

TELLER
Here you are, Mrs. Tull. Twenty-five dollars.

Pearl is silent and, turning away from the teller, she places the money in her purse and walks quickly from the bank.

EXT. CITIZEN'S BANK - DAY

Pearl, unsmiling, stands in front of the bank for a moment. Nobody else is around. She turns toward home.

EXT. SWEENEY BROS. PRODUCE & GROCERY - DAY

Pearl, still wearing her hat, stands in front of the store. Propped in the window is a faded sign -- "Cashier Wanted."

INT. SWEENEY'S GROCERY - DAY

Pearl enters and crosses to Mr. Sweeney, who is ringing up groceries at the cash register.

PEARL

I see you're still in need of a cashier.

SWEENEY

You're a perceptive woman, Mrs. Tull.

CUSTOMER

Mr. Sweeney, this soup can's dented. Can I have something off?

Mr. Sweeney seems affable enough. But before he can speak --

PEARL

Soup's soup. Full price.

ANGLE ON CUSTOMER

who looks at Pearl, then to Mr. Sweeney, who is looking admiringly at Pearl. The job is hers.

SWEENEY

That's right. Full price, Ma'am.

Sweeney steps aside and Pearl places her purse beneath the counter.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Without another word, Sweeney moves off, and Pearl, still wearing her hat, finishes ringing up the order. The customer appears incredulous.

PEARL

That's seven dollars and thirty cents.

The customer hands over the money.

CUSTOMER

(half sarcastic)

Congratulations.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Pearl, wearing a pillbox hat with net, exits the church. She says a brief hello to the minister. Accompanying her are Ezra and Jenny, the latter of whom talks with Melanie, a schoolmate, whose mother stands nearby.

JENNY

Melanie, I just love your dress.

MELANIE'S MOTHER

(to Pearl)

How do, Mrs. Tull. Such a nice sermon.
I haven't seen Mr. Tull lately. How
is he?

PEARL

(curt)

Away on business.

Pearl ushers her kids down the sidewalk. Ezra takes out his recorder and starts playing as Jenny takes her mother's arm.

PEARL

(calling back)

He's in charge of the whole territory
now.

(then, to Jenny)

Careful, Jenny. Your shoe might come
untied.

INT. TULL HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Cody and Lorena, a fourteen-year-old neighborhood beauty, sit at the dining room table doing homework. Cody is drinking a beer.

LORENA

You sure know a lot about statistics.

CODY

(flattered)

I guess you could say it's a hobby
of mine.

LORENA

Not many people could remember so
many numbers, I can tell you that.

CODY

I'll have to agree with you there.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra walks through the room on his way to the kitchen. He plays his recorder.

LORENA

Who's that?

CODY

My brother Ezra, dummy.

LORENA

Well, how should I know. He's sure good-looking.

CODY

(uneasy)

Good-looking. Ezra?

LORENA

And he's so serious. He must be deep.

Lorena goes back to her homework. Cody is quiet for a moment, then --

CODY

(matter-of-fact)

Some people think he's dangerous. He has fits. All of a sudden he'll be foaming at the mouth.

LORENA

(not looking up)

I don't believe you.

CODY

When he gets that way, I'm the only one brave enough to go near him.

LORENA

I don't believe a word you're saying.

Lorena looks out the dining room window.

LORENA (Contd.)

Your mother's coming.

ANGLE ON CODY

who jumps up and shoves the beer bottle under the buffet cabinet. Lorena laughs.

LORENA (Contd.)

I was just teasing. You ought to
see your face. I don't even know
your mother.

Cody is relieved. His defenses are down. He retrieves the
beer.

CODY

(sitting back down)

The Sweeney Meanie. The cashier down
at the grocery.

LORENA

Well, we do our shopping at Esmond's.
How come she works? Where's your
father?

CODY

Missing in action.

LORENA

Oops, sorry.

She turns back to her homework as Cody swigs his beer. From
the kitchen we can hear Ezra's recorder.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - PORCH - EARLY EVENING

Cody sits on the porch glider. Ezra and Jenny, carrying
school books, walk up.

EZRA

Hello, brother of mine.

JENNY

Is Mom home yet?

CODY

(sullen)

Mom? Oh, you mean Pearl.

(beat)

She's on the warpath again. Better
look out.

Reluctantly, all three enter the house.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

As the children enter, they hear Pearl slamming things around
in the kitchen and talking to herself.

PEARL (O.S.)

Goddamn kids.

They exit the living room toward the stairs.

ANGLE ON FIREPLACE

We hold for a moment on the mantel where the three picture frames have been filled with photographs of the children.

INT. JENNY'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING

The children enter the room, which is a complete mess. Heaps of clothes all over the floor. Empty drawers have been pulled from the bureau. Jenny's dresses lay in a heap, the closet stands open, its hangers stripped.

CODY

Jen, what did you do?

JENNY

(teary-eyed)

Nothing. Nothing, I swear.

All three begin to pick up dresses and drawers and to otherwise straighten up. Jenny starts to cry as they work.

ANGLE ON EZRA

who seems even more affected by this than the others. He's struggling to face the incident. Finally --

EZRA

I wish Dad were here.

At first there is no response.

CODY

(after a moment)

Well, he's not, so shut up.

JENNY

(not kidding)

Let's run away from home.

CODY

Where?

From downstairs, Pearl calls.

PEARL (O.S.)

Children, supper.

EZRA
(resigned)
Let's go. We can finish in here
later.

INT. TULL KITCHEN - EVENING

Cody, Ezra and Jenny are seated at the table. Pearl stands, takes Spam with a fork, places it on a plate and starts slicing.

PEARL
(head down)
It's not enough that I have to work
'til five p.m. I come home and find
the table not set, the breakfast
dishes not washed, supper not cooked,
floors not swept, mail in a heap on
the mat -- and not a sign of any of you.

The kids are silent, hoping this will soon blow over.

PEARL (Contd.)
I know what's going on. I know what
you're up to. Savages.

ANGLE ON CODY

as Pearl hands him his plate. He knows from the last remark
that this incident will not soon end. So do --

EZRA & JENNY

who quietly take their plates from Pearl.

PEARL (Contd.)
I know what people say. Customers
are glad to tell me. 'Mrs. Tull,
that oldest boy of yours is certainly
growing up.' I know what they mean.
(to Cody)

They've seen you with a pack of Camels
hanging around the hydrants with girls
no better than tramps.

CODY
(protests)
No.

PEARL

Girls in tight sweaters and ankle chains. I just have to smile and take it.

JENNY

(quietly)

But not me, Mama.

PEARL

(all ice)

I beg your pardon.

JENNY

I don't do any of those things.

PEARL

You! I know about you. I couldn't believe my ears. 'Oh Melanie, I just love your dress.' A cheap little number from Sears. The plaid wasn't matched, a bunch of artificial flowers at the waist.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Pearl turns to Cody.

PEARL (Contd.)

Oh, your sister says, I wish I had that dress.

Cody looks at Jenny, who is crying silently. Ezra keeps his eye on his plate, fearing he's next in line.

PEARL

is in a world of her own.

PEARL (Contd.)

And Melanie's mother. Well, it's just like opening a door to such a person. First thing she'll be walking in here as big as life bringing the catalogue. 'Mrs. Tull, I know Jenny would love a dress like Melanie's.'

ANGLE ON KIDS

silent. Hoping it'll stop right here.

PEARL

does stop, but only to reflect.

PEARL (Contd.)

What's wrong with us, I'd like to know. Aren't we good enough for my own blood daughter? I'm doing my level best to provide. Slaving away every day at that grocery...

Pearl looks right at Jenny.

PEARL (Contd.)

We're family. We used to be so close. What happened to us? Why are you so disloyal?

Jenny says nothing. Pearl sits down and reaches for the bowl of peas and starts to serve herself with a spoon. The subject is closed.

ANGLE ON CODY

who clears his throat.

CODY

But that was Sunday.

PEARL

Yes?

CODY

And this is Wednesday.

PEARL

Yes.

Ezra looks more afraid than ever.

CODY

It's Wednesday, dammit. That's three days ago. Why bring up something from Sunday?

CLOSE ON CODY

Pearl throws the spoon in his face, and then slaps him.

CLOSE ON JENNY

Pearl grabs one of Jenny's braids and yanks her off her chair.

CLOSE ON EZRA

who is terrified. Pearl turns the bowl of peas over Ezra's head. Peas fly everywhere.

BACK TO PEARL

standing and spent.

PEARL

Parasites! I wish you'd all die and let me go free. I wish I'd find you dead in your beds!

Cody, Ezra and Jenny look at their mother unblinkingly. Silence. No one speaks.

Pearl leaves the kitchen and goes upstairs.

VARIOUS ANGLES - MUSIC OVER

The three Tulls clear the table, wash dishes, clean the kitchen, pull the shades in the windows and lock the back door. Silently, they go upstairs to bed.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DREAM - DAY

Several Nazi soldiers are seated around an empty chair. Hanging over this chair is what is obviously an interrogation lamp. The room is filled with cigarette smoke.

SOLDIER #1

We want to know everything about you. We must know everything... now.

REVERSE ON JENNY

who is being held near the entrance by the other soldiers.

JENNY

(terrified)

I don't know anything. You're making a mistake. Really.

BACK TO SCENE

This is not a place one wants to spend a vacation.

SOLDIER #1

Sit her down.

JENNY

NO!

The soldiers strap Jenny to the chair, point the light in her face.

JENNY (Contd.)

I told you, this is all a big mistake. Call my mom, you'll see.

PEARL (O.S.)

Your mother is here.

ANGLE ON ENTRANCE

Pearl stands in the doorway, arms folded, looking at her daughter. Her face is sinister.

JENNY

Mom!

PEARL

(ignores her)

Herr Commandant.. That's her.
She's the one.

THE NAZIS

smile, look at Jenny.

JENNY

terrified, looks at her mother.

ANGLE ON PEARL

laughing. Soon she stops, considers something, and walks toward Jenny. Whispers in her ear --

PEARL

(matter-of-fact)

I raised you only to eat you.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jenny wakes up suddenly. She's shaking. Soon, she places the covers over her head and cries.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - "THANKSGIVING 1945" - DAY

A year later. A familiar 1940 Buick drives past the house. Beck is at the wheel. He goes to the end of the block, turns around and parks before reaching the Tull house, where he can remain unobserved.

ANGLE ON HOUSE

Ezra sits on the front porch glider. He plays his recorder while idly rocking back and forth. Cody opens the front door and comes out. From inside the house, Pearl calls.

PEARL (O.S.)
Don't go too far. The turkey's
almost ready.

The door slams behind Cody, who looks toward his brother.

CODY
Want to walk up to Sloop Street?

EZRA
What's up there?

CODY
(nonchalant)
Nothing much. Just this new girl
at school.

EZRA
Oh, yes. Edith.

CLOSE ON CODY

surprised. Hoping his brother is mistaken.

CODY
You know who she is? A black-
haired girl...ninth grader...Edith
Taber?

ANGLE ON EZRA

He's excited. Thinks this is what Cody wishes to hear.

EZRA
Yes, Edith! I was walking home
yesterday playing my whistle and
she caught up with me.

CODY

She did...

EZRA

Asked me if I wanted to see her recorder. So I went to her house and saw it.

CODY

(annoyed)

You did what?

EZRA

It's great, Cody. Plays sharps and flats with hardly any extra trouble.

CODY

You were in her house.

(then)

Did she know you were my brother?

EZRA

Her mother served us cookies.

Cody's about to explode.

CODY

You met her mother?!

EZRA

I wish I had a new recorder. Do you think Mother would get me one for Christmas?

That does it. Cody's had all he can take.

CODY

You dunce. You raving idiot. Do you think she's got money for goddamn whistles?

EZRA

(taken aback)

Well...no. I guess not.

(pause)

Are we going to Sloop Street?

Cody doesn't answer. He kicks a porch pillar, goes into the house and slams the door.

ANGLE ON EZRA

who, after a moment, follows him in.

ANGLE ON STREET

where Beck remains seated in the car.

INT. TULL DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Thanksgiving dinner is over and the family sits amiably around the dining room table playing Monopoly. Jenny and Ezra are already out of the game. Cody has almost all the money stacked in front of him. It's Pearl's turn.

VARIOUS ANGLES

as she throws the dice and lands on Broadway, which Cody owns.

PEARL

That's it for me. I've only got three dollars, not enough for a mortgage. You win again, Cody.

(then)

We should have remembered not to let you in this game. You always win.

All laugh as they start to gather up the pieces.

JENNY

Mother, please put on the skit. Please!

EZRA

It wouldn't be a holiday without it.

PEARL

What do you say, Cody?

ANOTHER ANGLE

Without waiting for Cody's reply, Pearl gets up from the table and begins to play Ivy, a maiden in distress. Cody gets up and pretends to be the villain. He starts to "twirl a moustache."

CODY

(as villain)

'Ivy, sweet, sweet Ivy, lean upon my arm.'

PEARL

'Oh, my no. I cannot. I must not.'

Pearl rolls her eyes and shrinks into a corner. She has the blushing gaze and old-fashioned singsong response down perfectly.

ANGLE ON EZRA

the hero, who now enters from the other side of the room.

EZRA

(bowing gallantly before Pearl)

'Have no fear, young lady. I will pay the money for the mortgage on the farm.'

Ezra dances Pearl into the living room where they collapse on the couch in giggles. Jenny applauds wildly.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Cody, Pearl and Ezra return to take an old-fashioned bow as the applause continues.

EXT. CALVERT STREET - NIGHT

Beck's car is still parked. His eyes are closed. He awakens and looks toward the house -- every light but Pearl's bedroom light is off. He watches as this window goes dark. Beck starts the car and drives off.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - "DECEMBER 20, 1945" - DAY

Cody, just home from school, comes up the snow-lined walk onto the porch, opens the front door and calls.

CODY

Anyone home?

No answer. He enters.

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cody enters the bedroom. It is extremely neat. He goes to the bureau and starts opening drawers -- finds a change purse, opens it and removes one dollar.

ANOTHER ANGLE

He continues opening drawers. His mother's underclothes are neatly aligned. There is no sign of any of his father's clothes -- no socks, no underwear, no shirts.

ANGLE ON CLOSET

as Cody pulls open the door, where Pearl's clothes hang neatly. Her shoes hang inside a shoe bag on the door. His father's clothes are gone except for a hanger strung with faded, frayed and spotted ties. On the floor in a corner of the closet sit a pair of Beck's shoes so ancient the toes curl up.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Cody goes to the dressing table, opens the top drawer. Pearl's handkerchiefs, perfectly ironed, are stacked as if in an invisible box. Another drawer contains a stack of Beck's letters. We can see they are addressed to Pearl Tull. Cody begins to open them.

CODY

(reads aloud)

'Sorry the enclosed is a little smaller
than expected as I have incurred some...'

He tosses it aside and opens another.

CODY (Contd.)

'Ed Ball is talking promotion and I
expect a fat raise.'

He goes quickly through the rest. The downstairs door slams and we can hear Ezra's recorder. Cody replaces the letters, slams drawer, looks quickly around and exits.

EXT. BUSHNELL STREET - DAY

Cody, Ezra and Jenny are shopping for a Christmas present for their mother. They pause in front of Scarlatti's Restaurant.

JENNY

Maybe instead of a regular present,
we take Mother here for dinner.

CODY

With what we got? Fat chance.

EXT. SCARLATTI'S RESTAURANT - DAY

It is the most elegant restaurant they know. Two urns decorated with red ribbon flank a handsome door on which a large wreath hangs. The front door opens and the Tulls stop to look inside.

THE KIDS' POV

The dining room has red-flocked wallpaper, soft lights in pink shades and a crystal chandelier. It has been decorated for Christmas. The tables are covered in snowy white linen with napkins folded in cones. A pot of poinsettias rests on each one. The crystal and silver gleam.

MRS. SCARLATTI

a handsome woman of a certain age, comes out of the restaurant. She has dark hair swept back in a chignon and wears a severe black dress with strands of pearls a la Chanel. Not your usual Baltimore lady. As she stoops to adjust the bows on the urns she sees Ezra.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Is that my Ezra? And this must be Cody and Jenny. Doing your Christmas shopping. Well, have a very merry Christmas.

(then)

Ezra, I'll see you Saturday, regular time.

Mrs. Scarlatti checks the decorations again, turns, goes back into the restaurant and the door closes.

JENNY

(amazed)

How do you know Mrs. Scarlatti, Ezra?

Ezra shrugs. No response.

CODY

What's next Saturday?

EZRA

(uneasy)

I'm learning to fold napkins and set tables. Last time, she paid me a dollar.

ANOTHER ANGLE

He reaches into the pocket of his jacket and hands it to Cody. Jenny, thrilled at the additional money, suggests --

JENNY

Let's buy Mother a diamond ring.

CODY

That's really stupid. Even a dumb girl ought to know you can't buy a diamond ring for three dollars and twenty cents.

The three continue walking.

EZRA

Mother would think we wasted our money.

JENNY

I didn't mean a real one.

CODY

How about gloves?

JENNY

It shouldn't be anything to wear.

EZRA

(agrees)

Or that she needs.

Cody shoots his brother a look. Agreeable Ezra.

CODY

I know what you want for Christmas, Ezra. World peace.

EZRA

World what? I'd like a recorder.

CODY

Well, you're not getting one. You're getting a cap with turn down ear-flaps and corduroy pants.

JENNY

(pushes Cody)

Cody, you weren't supposed to tell.

Ezra looks down at the sidewalk, deflated. A woman putting on her child's mittens stops in front of them. They separate and go around her.

JENNY

Remember when Daddy bought us a sled and Mother said it was silly because it hardly ever snowed on Christmas?

EZRA

But then on December twenty-sixth we
woke up and there was snow everywhere.
We had the best sled on the block and
Cody was charging for rides...

ANGLE ON JENNY

who stops walking. Cody and Ezra also stop and look at her.

JENNY

Daddy's really not ever coming home
again. Is he?

CODY

(places arm around her)
Come on, the store closes at six.

They resume walking three abreast and Cody takes a pinch of
Ezra's sleeve so they won't drift apart in the crowd.

EXT. ARMY BARRACKS - "1952" - NIGHT

to establish. Somewhere in North Carolina.

INT. ARMY BARRACKS - NIGHT

Very late. Everyone is asleep. Definitely basic training
time. A rustling is heard from outside which awakens several
of the men. One of the soldiers gets up, looks to his buddy.

SOLDIER #1

You hear that?

SOLDIER #2

Probably a tomcat.

More noise, like very slow walking. One man grabs his M-1
and starts for the door. Another comes from behind and grabs
hold of it.

SOLDIER #1

We ain't in Korea yet.

The soldier puts his rifle down. The men head outside.

EXT. ARMY BARRACKS - NIGHT

The two soldiers are joined by men from other barracks who
have also heard the noise.

SOLDIER #3
(whispers)
Sounded like it was coming from
those trees.

ANGLE ON TREES

Nothing but the moon poking through.

SOLDIER #2
Come on, we're just getting spooked
for nothin'.

Suddenly a man steps from behind a tree. He's pointing a rifle directly at the soldiers.

SOLDIER #1
Holy shit!

Another soldier draws his pistol, while yet another shines a flashlight toward the man.

ANGLE ON MAN

who we now see is Ezra, nineteen, standing in his underwear. He's bigger than when we last saw him.

SOLDIER #3
(holding pistol)
Put it down, man, or I'll shoot.

No reply. Ezra just stands there.

SOLDIER #3 (Contd.)
I'm not kidding. I'll shoot!

Still nothing. Then --

SOLDIER #1
It's Tull.

SOLDIER #3
What the hell is he doing?

SOLDIER #2
(figures it out)
Nothing.
(beat)
He's asleep.

The soldier holding the pistol puts it down while the others stare in amazement.

SOLDIER #2 (Contd.)

(again)
The guy's sound asleep.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE STREET - DAY

A Greyhound bus makes its way toward the depot. We can see Ezra through the window, dressed in his uniform. He looks dejected.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS DEPOT - DAY

The bus comes to a stop and several passengers disembark. Eventually, Ezra climbs down the steps, carrying a duffel bag.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As he heads along the sidewalk, people approach and offer their congratulations, pat him on the back, say, "Nice work, soldier." Ezra, embarrassed, keeps his head to the ground the whole time.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Ezra looks for a taxi, he spots his mother standing next to a wooden bench. After a moment she comes over and silently enfolds her son in her arms.

INT. SCARLATTI'S KITCHEN - "1955" - DAY

Three years later. It is eight in the morning. The kitchen is empty except for Ezra and Mrs. Scarlatti. Ezra, at twenty-two, still lives at home with his mother. He is very much at home here, too, as he stirs a dish on the stove.

ANGLE ON TABLE

where Mrs. Scarlatti sits, sipping her soup. A stack of bills, etc., is pushed to one side of the table. Ezra watches her anxiously for an opinion.

MRS. SCARLATTI
Twenty pieces of garlic. I still
don't believe it.

EZRA
(pleased)
It'll settle your stomach. I'd like
to put it on Sunday's dinner menu.

MRS. SCARLATTI

It's delicious, dear boy, but not a dish for our customers. Can you imagine putting gizzard soup on a menu?

She continues eating.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The back door opens and Mr. Burdett, an elderly gentleman, enters carrying a bushel of vegetables. He nods hello to Ezra and Mrs. Scarlatti as he places it on a counter and goes out for another. Ezra begins to unload the bushel.

EZRA

(picks up eggplant)

Aren't these beautiful, Mrs. Scarlatti? Mr. Burdett has brought us a whole bushelful. Shall I try an eggplant casserole?

Mr. Burdett returns with the last basket -- tomatoes. He takes one out to show Ezra.

MR. BURDETT

Look at this! I wasn't even going to bring them. There ought to be a state law against selling red plastic and calling it a tomato.

EZRA

We shouldn't even serve tomatoes in the winter.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Dear boy, our clientele would get up and leave. Imagine, no tomatoes in the salad.

EZRA

(offers)

We could have different vegetables -- whatever's in season.

MR. BURDETT

Good point.

MRS. SCARLATTI

(won't budge)

At Scarlatti's, people expect continental food, no matter what season.

EZRA
(off and running)
I'd put up a blackboard -- just like
in France -- and write on it everyday.
Maybe only two or three dishes a day.

MRS. SCARLATTI
It wouldn't be Scarlatti's.

ANGLE ON MR. BURDETT

who sits down at the table. He knows the subject is closed, yet enjoys that Ezra is so determined.

EZRA
(continues unpacking vegetables)
Or maybe no menu at all. I'd just
look at people and say, 'You look a
little tired. How about some oxtail
stew -- or maybe gizzard soup. Made
with love.'

MRS. SCARLATTI
(laughs)
And twenty pieces of garlic! Angel
boy, you'll have to wait until I'm
gone.

Ezra serves Mr. Burdett a plate of gizzard soup, as Mrs. Scarlatti continues eating.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - "JUNE, 1958" - EVENING

Three years later. Jenny, twenty-three and beautiful, pays off a taxi. Her suitcase is next to her.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The front door of the house opens and Pearl, fifty-nine and in a flowered dress, high heeled pumps and a veiled hat, walks out arm and arm with Ezra, now twenty-five. Cody, twenty-eight, dark and handsome in a New York business suit, follows.

ANGLE ON JENNY

The trio now spots Jenny and stops.

PEARL
Ezra, when you say family dinner,
you mean family dinner!

Jenny walks to the bottom of the porch steps where her mother waits. Pearl kisses Jenny.

EZRA

(to Jenny)

I didn't know you'd come all this way just for supper.

PEARL

Ezra's got something important he wants to say and he's taking us all to Scarlatti's Restaurant.

(looks Jenny over)

Jenny, honey, you're thin as a stick. How long are you planning to stay? Cody is staying overnight.

CODY

No, I'm not. I'm not spending the night. I'm on a schedule.

JENNY

Ezra, let me go in and change.

EZRA

No, no, you're fine.

Ezra takes Jenny's suitcase into the house and comes back out.

ANGLE ON CAR

All walk to the curb where Cody opens the door to a shiny blue car and helps Pearl inside. Ezra and Jenny get in the back seat.

CODY

What do you think? Smell that new car smell.

Cody starts the engine and pulls into traffic.

EZRA

It's nice, all right.

CODY

Of course, it's not paid for yet.

PEARL

Cody Tull. You're not buying on time.

CODY

Mother, you forget. Time is my business.

INT. SCARLATTI'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Pearl, Cody and Jenny are seated. Ezra talks to a waiter who brings another place setting. Pearl polishes a fork with her napkin.

CODY

Mother, do you have any idea who called for a time and motion study last week?

PEARL

(she's in a good mood)
As a matter of fact...I don't.

CODY

The Tanner Corporation.

She's in less of one now, but recovers quickly.

PEARL

Really.

JENNY

Tanner?

CODY

It's where our father worked. Where he still may be for all I know.

He pauses for a sip of water. He's speaking to Jenny but really talking to Pearl.

CODY (Contd.)

Jenny, you should have seen it -- such a nickel and dime operation. So tacky.

(then)

That same afternoon, I went out and bought my Pontiac.

PEARL

(to Cody by way of Jenny)
There never was the slightest thing 'tacky' about the Tanner Corporation.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra is now seated. The waiter has come to the table with a wine bottle. He pours some into Ezra's glass. Ezra tastes it and signals the waiter to fill the other glasses.

CODY

(to Pearl)

Oh, Mother, face it! The Tanner Corporation is a trash heap.

PEARL

Cody, why must you act this way to me?

EZRA

Please, Mother. Cody. It's a family dinner.

(he turns to his sister)

Jenny, raise your glass. This is a toast. Mother...

PEARL

Thank you, dear, but wine in all this heat would settle on my stomach like a rock.

EZRA

It's a toast to me, Mother.

The double doors to the kitchen open and Mrs. Scarlatti crosses to the table. She places her hand on Ezra's shoulder. All the Tulls look up.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Well, pour me some wine, honey.

Ezra does and gives the glass to her as he rises.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The others are curious as to what is going on.

BACK TO EZRA

who takes a dollar bill from his wallet and hands it to Mrs. Scarlatti.

EZRA

(beaming)

With this dollar bill I hereby purchase a fifty-fifty partnership in Scarlatti's.

PEARL

(looks hard at Ezra)

I don't understand.

MRS. SCARLATTI
Ezra's been my right hand for so long.
He's like my own son. I couldn't
manage without him.

PEARL
He's not your son.

MRS. SCARLATTI
No, my son was killed in the war. I
had hoped things would be different.
Lucky for me, Ezra came along.

Pearl looks at Ezra. She's fuming.

PEARL
Ezra! How could you accept such a
gift? What will people think? And
from a woman to boot.
(pause)
I thought you were going to college.

EZRA
(matter of factly)
Mother, I like making meals for people.

MRS. SCARLATTI
(as she sips wine)
He's a sweetie and so talented.

PEARL
Ezra, how could you? You'll be
beholden all your life.

CODY AND JENNY

feel terrible for their brother. Cody touches his mother's
arm.

CODY
Let him be, Mother. It's his life.

PEARL
(pulls her arm away)
You don't care.

She rises and grabs her purse.

JENNY
(this can't be happening)
I think it's great. We'll always
have a place to eat.

PEARL

None of you care if this family
breaks up!

Pearl turns and marches out the door. Ezra goes after her. Cody and Jenny watch as Mrs. Scarlatti tucks the dollar bill into her bosom, sips her wine and shakes her head.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Mothers.

Cody leans in and whispers to his sister --

CODY

The money will be very safe in there.

Jenny laughs.

EXT. SCARLATTI'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cody and Jenny stand in front of the restaurant beside Cody's shiny new car.

CODY

Want me to drop you at home? I
should have been in Delaware an hour
ago.

JENNY

Cody, if I ever get married do you
think you can work it into your
schedule?

CODY

(laughs)
I'll try.
(pause)
So, do you want a ride?

JENNY

No, I ate too much. I have to walk
it off.

CODY

In that case, if you turn left on
Groton Avenue and cut across the
playground, you'll save about eight
minutes.

(he smiles at his sister)
Just kidding.

She kisses her brother on the cheek. Cody gets into his car
and drives off as Jenny walks toward home.

EXT. BALTIMORE STREET - NIGHT

Jenny walks slowly past Linsey's Candy and Tobacco, Bobbi Jo's Barbeque, a pharmacy, and stops in front of a smudged plate glass window with peeling gold letters -- "Mrs. Emma Parkins - Readings & Advice."

EXT. MRS. PARKINS STOREFRONT - JENNY'S POV - NIGHT

Jenny sees Mrs. Parkins herself pacing the room. She is a fat, drab old woman with a paper fan on a popsicle stick. Jenny hesitates, then turns the door handle and walks in.

INT. MRS. PARKINS STOREFRONT - NIGHT

Mrs. Parkins seems neither pleased nor unhappy to have a customer.

MRS. PARKINS

Come right in. Have a seat.

JENNY

(polite)

Thank you.

Jenny sits down stiffly at a table near the door. Mrs. Parkins settles down with a groan in an armchair on the other side of the table. She still fans herself.

MRS. PARKINS

Seems like every year, the heat just hits me harder.

Mrs. Parkins takes Jenny's hand and studies her palm.

MRS. PARKINS (Contd.)

Long life, good career line...

JENNY

(surprised)

How did you know I'm going to be a doctor?

MRS. PARKINS

No sense beating around the bush.
Is there something special you want to ask?

JENNY

Should I get...well...married? I mean,
I have this chance. I've been asked.

Mrs. Parkins puts down the fan and gazes at the ceiling.
After a moment --

MRS. PARKINS
Married! Should you or shouldn't you?

ANGLE ON JENNY

who opens her purse and takes out a letter.

JENNY
(looking at letter)
That's what I don't know. Harley's
researched everything. How much we
could save in medical school by sharing
a single apartment. And we could buy
groceries in economy lots...and...

Jenny looks up. Mrs. Parkins is staring at her.

MRS. PARKINS
And?

JENNY
And -- he thinks I'm intelligent and
he says he loves me.

Mrs. Parkins picks up Jenny's hand that still holds the letter.

MRS. PARKINS
You'll have other proposals.

JENNY
But not like Harley. He's a genius.

MRS. PARKINS
Here is my advice. Go on and get
married.

JENNY
(taken aback)
Get married? But we've only had one
real date.

MRS. PARKINS
Go ahead. Do it. Or don't. No
matter.

(then)
You'll be destroyed by love.

Mrs. Parkins lets go of Jenny's hand.

MRS. PARKINS (Contd.)
That'll be two dollars.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Jenny half-smiles as she searches through her purse. As she hands the money to Mrs. Parkins --

JENNY
(self assured)
I could buy two restaurants with this.

Mrs. Parkins is confused. Jenny exits.

INT. SWEENEY'S GROCERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Pearl rings up purchases for a customer. She's quite efficient. As she finishes, a salesman in a business suit, tie and hat, steps up behind the customer, waiting his turn. He carries a briefcase and doesn't appear to be buying anything.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as the customer leaves the store, the man steps up to Pearl.

PEARL
Yes? Can I help you with something?

SALESMAN
Are you Mrs. Tull?

PEARL
Yes.

The man removes his hat and takes a business card out of his briefcase.

SALESMAN
I hope you don't mind my coming here.
(then)
I'm from American Life Insurance and Indemnity...

PEARL
(stricken)
Has something happened to Beck?

SALESMAN
(smiles)
No, Ma'am. He's just fine. We just need your okay on the pension plan that the Tanner Corporation is setting up.

Pearl looks around and sees there are no more customers at the moment. The man takes out a clipboard and explains.

SALESMAN (Contd.)

(reading)

As the wife, you are the primary beneficiary. But if you pre-decease Mr. Tull, we need an alternate beneficiary. Would that be Cody?

PEARL

Oh, no. All three children.

SALESMAN

Okay, whatever you say. That's Cody, Ezra and Jennifer, right?

PEARL

Right. Equally!

SALESMAN

(looks at papers)

I need your signature right here.

The man places the papers on the counter. Pearl takes out her eyeglasses, puts them on and looks over the documents. Then she takes the pen from the salesman and signs.

SALESMAN (Contd.)

Well, that does it.

He tears off a copy and hands it to Pearl.

PEARL

Do you need this pen?

The salesman replaces his hat, then smiles.

SALESMAN

Why, no, Mrs. Tull. You can keep it.

(pause)

I'm sorry to have bothered you, but Mr. Tull wanted to be sure everything was in perfect order. Good day.

The salesman leaves. Pearl looks at the pen in her hand.

CLOSE ON PEN

which reads -- "The Tanner Corporation."

BACK TO PEARL

who places the pen and paperwork in her purse. Another customer approaches the counter.

EXT. BALTIMORE STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Down the road a bit, we follow the salesman as he walks up to a parked late model Buick. Beck Tull is at the wheel. The salesman gets in and the car drives off.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Ezra makes his way among other visitors toward a room at the end of the hallway. He's wearing a shirt and tie, and carries a bouquet of flowers.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Ezra quietly pokes his head in the room, then carefully goes over to a table beside the bed where he removes old flowers from a vase and replaces them with the new ones.

ANGLE ON BED

where a fragile-looking Mrs. Scarlatti lies, sound asleep. Ezra kisses his fingers and gently presses them to her forehead. Then he straightens the handmade shawl which covers her legs and quietly exits.

EXT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - "JUNE, 1960" - NIGHT

Two years later. Scarlatti's now has a new, hand-painted wooden sign above the door -- "The Homesick Restaurant."

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

This place is entirely different. The red-flocked wall paper has been removed to show brick walls. Children's drawings, an Oriole baseball hat, lots of plants, and a motorcycle with a Marilyn Monroe cutout astride have become part of a very eclectic decor.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The wall between the kitchen and dining room is down and we can watch a very busy kitchen staff. There is a feeling of a family kitchen here except there are more cooks. One stirs soup while another removes a cake from the oven.

ANGLE ON RUTH

nineteen, a skinny, red-headed young woman in bib overalls. She is grating potatoes and talking to Ezra. He offers last minute instructions as he tastes one of the dishes offered by yet another cook.

ANOTHER ANGLE

A plump waitress comes over to Ezra and points to the door where a group of well-dressed people wait to be seated. The host of the group does not look happy. As soon as Ezra approaches, he complains.

CUSTOMER

I used to say, don't knock Baltimore until you've seen Scarlatti's. Why, when Mrs. Scarlatti was alive, you could bring anyone here.

EZRA

(polite)

I know there have been some changes, but...

CUSTOMER

I'll say there are changes. What kind of name is Homesick Restaurant?

The other people in the place have taken notice of this exchange.

EZRA

We're still a fine restaurant...

CUSTOMER

I can see the cooks in the kitchen!

EZRA

(calm)

I believe a meal tastes better if it is eaten in the room where it is prepared.

(then)

Why, tonight it's pot roast.

CUSTOMER

Pot roast! Pot roast I can get at home.

He claps on his hat and exits, followed by his out-of-town guests.

ANGLE ON EZRA

He watches the door slam and with a shrug turns toward other more satisfied customers.

ANGLE ON TABLE

where a professional-type gentleman is seated. A book lies open next to his plate. He's obviously overheard the irate customer. Ezra greets him politely.

EZRA

The pot roast the way you like it,
Mr. Kraft?

MR. KRAFT

(as he picks up book)
'Home is the place where when you go
there, they have to take you in.'
Robert Frost.

Ezra brightens as he walks toward the kitchen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Later. Pearl and a very pregnant Jenny sit at a large table.

JENNY

Is Cody bringing someone?

PEARL

A different girl every week! I
guess he can't find the right one.

Cody enters with Karen. They stand at the door and then spot the family table and cross to it. Karen is elegant, well-groomed, a beauty. She reluctantly lets go of Cody's arm as he seats her next to Jenny. Cody sits beside Pearl.

KAREN

(friendly)

Hello.

CODY

Mother, you remember Karen. And my
sister, Jenny.

(then)

Where's Harley?

Jenny doesn't answer. Ezra comes to the table and greets all. He carries a bottle of wine which he pours into glasses and then sits down next to Karen.

EZRA

(to Karen)
I'm glad you could come.

CODY

(raising glass)
To everybody's good health. And
to Ezra's food.

EZRA

(adds)
To a happy family dinner.

JENNY

That, too.

Everybody sips, including Pearl.

EZRA

The soup is on its way.

CODY

Are you having it brought barefoot
by runners?

EZRA

It's fresh off the stove. Piping
hot.

Pearl observes everything. Nothing gets past her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Later still. Soup plates are being removed by the waiter. Cody talks to Pearl but soon stops and watches Karen look at Ezra, speculatively. Finally, Ezra leans toward her and touches her earrings.

EZRA

How did you get those little circles
through your ears?

Cody starts to laugh but stops when he sees Karen raise her finger to her earlobe, mesmerized by Ezra.

CODY

Karen, let's go.

Karen hesitates, bewildered.

KAREN
But we haven't finished dinner.

Pearl understands. So does Jenny.

CODY
(rises)
I'm leaving. You can stay with
Ezra if you want.

Karen, embarrassed, rises and follows Cody out of the restaurant. Ezra doesn't speak, equally bewildered. Then --

JENNY
(laughing)
Cody's impossible. It must have been
the lukewarm soup.

PEARL
Who are you to speak against your
brothers? Married not even a year,
pregnant, and talking divorce.

Pearl gets up, gathers her purse and gloves, and exits.

ANGLE ON JENNY

who sighs, leans over to kiss Ezra, and follows her mother.

THE WAITER

arrives with the next course and stands looking at the empty places.

EZRA
(to waiter)
They left. I guess they weren't
hungry.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra gets up, takes the tray from the waiter and walks to the kitchen. He puts it on the kitchen table and looks at Ruth who is at the stove..

EZRA (Contd.)
I wish just once we could get through
a meal from start to finish.

Ruth quits what she's doing at the stove and crosses to Ezra.

EZRA (Contd.)
We once got as far as dessert. Does
that count?

Ruth takes two plates from the tray, finds two knives and forks, then sits Ezra down. She pats his arm and sits next to him.

EZRA (Contd.)
I wish they'd tasted your pot roast.

RUTH
(soft)
Doesn't matter.

They start to eat.

RUTH (Contd.)
Back home, we saved our fights for
Saturday night -- after dinner.

Ezra continues to eat, content.

INT. JENNY'S APARTMENT - "DECEMBER, 1960" - NIGHT

Six months later. A tiny apartment where Jenny, now twenty-five, and baby, Rebecca, live.

VARIOUS ANGLES

In an alcove is the baby's bed. Medical books are stacked on makeshift bookshelves made of bricks and boards. A fan on top of the bureau turns noisily. There is an unmade Murphy bed. Dishes in the sink. And most of all --

THE BABY

is crying. And crying.

ANGLE ON JENNY

who sits in an armchair and desperately tries concentrating on a medical book. Reluctantly, she puts the book down and crosses the room where she picks up the baby, who immediately stops crying.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Jenny puts the baby back in its crib and as she walks away, the baby resumes crying.

JENNY
(out loud)
Becky, please, darling. It's time
to sleep.

But Becky continues crying. Jenny returns to the crib, reaches in for the bottle and picks the baby up. Becky cries even louder.

JENNY (Contd.)
(both angry and exhausted)
Stop it.

But the baby's not listening.

ANGLE ON CRIB

as Jenny flings the baby against the mattress. She throws the bottle at her, but it bounces off the side of the crib and falls to the floor.

JENNY (Contd.)
You goddamn baby!

CLOSE ON BABY

now exhausted from crying, sobs quietly.

JENNY (Contd.)
I wish you were dead.

The baby starts crying loudly once again.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Jenny walks back to the armchair and sits down. Stares into space. Then --

JENNY (Contd.)
(realizes)
I'm just like...her.

The phone rings. She answers. It's Pearl.

PEARL (O.S.)
Jenny. Don't you write your family
anymore?

Jenny starts crying. Dry, ragged sobs.

JENNY
Oh, Mommy...

PEARL (O.S.)

Jenny, hang up. Go lie down on the couch. I'll be there as soon as Ezra can drive me. Please, honey.

The phone clicks. After a moment, Jenny slowly hangs up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JENNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Two weeks later. The place is immaculate. A bunch of flowers sits on the table.

ANGLE ON PEARL

who rocks gently in the chair, the baby on her lap. She reads to her from "Raggedy Ann and the Paper Dragon" while Cody talks on the phone, finishing up a business call.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Jenny lies on the Murphy bed which is made up with squared corners. Ezra sits on a chair next to the bed. He holds an empty bowl. Jenny has just finished eating.

EZRA

(to all)

Some people don't take to gizzard soup, but Jenny has finished the whole bowl.

Cody just rolls his eyes. Pearl looks up from her book.

PEARL

Jenny must be getting her strength back.

Cody hangs up, turns to Pearl.

CODY

Or maybe she's too weak to resist.

EZRA

Very funny.

CODY

Well, it's all arranged. I've hired a sitter, Delilah Something. She starts tomorrow. Full-time.

PEARL

Good. I've used up all my vacation time and Jenny needs to rest a while longer.

JENNY

(looks up)

I'm really well. I have to get back to the hospital.

Cody, Ezra and Pearl look at each other. Jenny is still very fragile. Cody then walks over to the bed, stands beside Ezra.

CODY

Not yet, honey. Not until you're one hundred percent.

Cody slings his suitcoat over his shoulder, gives his sister a little salute and is out the door.

ANGLE ON BABY

who starts to squirm. Pearl finds her place in the book,

PEARL

(to baby)

I used to read this to your mother when she was a baby.

ANGLE ON JENNY

who has heard this comment and smiles to herself. As Pearl resumes reading to the baby, Jenny closes her eyes and listens.

PEARL (O.S.)

(reading)

'The fight between Mr. Doodle and the Dragon was a great sight to see. The Dragon could growl very loud when he wanted to, and he growled louder than usual...'

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - "MAY, 1963" - NIGHT

On a blackboard is tonight's menu. One dish -- oxtail stew. Cody sits at a table with a reserved sign. Five settings and a booster chair. Ezra comes over.

EZRA
It's all set for six-thirty.
(impatient)
What's keeping them?

CODY
What's the problem? It's only stew.

Ezra sits down.

EZRA
It's not only stew. It's more like, you see, there's this one cook, this real country cook and oxtail stew is the least of it.
(pause)
It's more like what you long for when you're sad and everyone's been wearing you down.

CODY
(checks watch)
If you say so.

ANGLE ON DOOR

Pearl, Jenny and an almost three-year-old Becky enter. Becky runs over to Ezra.

CODY (Contd.)
Well here they all are.

Mother and daughter carry no parcels but it is clear they've been shopping. Perhaps it is the frazzled cross look they share. Jenny's lipstick is chewed off. Pearl's hat is crooked.

ANGLE ON TABLE

Pearl starts talking as she approaches the table. Jenny places Becky in the high chair and sits down.

EZRA
(forever the host)
I'm glad you could make it.

PEARL
(launching right in)
Jenny and her notions. We found just the right thing. A nice pale gray with a crocheted collar.
Suitable for a second marriage.
Why are there five places set?

Pearl continues standing.

EZRA
Have a seat, Mother.

PEARL
(as she sits)
First, she asks me to go shopping
with her and then she throws a
tantrum right in the middle of
Hutzler's.

Jenny can stand this no longer.

JENNY
Pale gray! Anthracite is what the
saleslady called it. No way. I'm
not getting married in a coal-black
wedding dress.

CODY
Well, I'm sure it'll all work itself...

PEARL
And then, only to spite me, she pulls
out something white as snow.

JENNY
Cream-colored, Mother.

PEARL
Cream, white, what's the difference.
You're marrying for the second time.
The man has six children and his
divorce isn't even final.

JENNY
I happen to like that dress.

Silence. Both Ezra and Cody hope it's over. Then --

PEARL
Well, I can see that nothing can
satisfy you.

JENNY
Mother, I am satisfied. I love my
cream-colored dress and so will Joe.
Will you please just get off my back?

EZRA
Now, now...

PEARL

I don't have to stay here and take it.

Pearl gets up, turns abruptly and marches back across the dining room, as erect as a wind-up doll.

ANGLE ON JENNY

who pulls out a compact, looks in it, let's Becky look in it, then returns it to her purse.

EZRA

Please, Jenny, go after her.

CODY

Ezra, for once, just drop it.

(then)

I don't think I'm up to a family dinner anyway.

Cody starts to get up.

EZRA

Cody, Jenny, wait. This is important. It's an occasion.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra gets up and walks toward the kitchen where he takes the arm of the red-headed country cook, Ruth. She walks jauntily, wiping her hands on her backside while Ezra hovers adoringly by her side.

ANGLE ON CODY AND JENNY

as Ezra leads Ruth over to them.

EZRA

I'd like you to meet Ruth. Ruth, this is Cody and Jenny. And Becky.

(then)

We're getting married in September.

CODY

(surprised)

Ruth?

JENNY

That's wonderful!

Jenny kisses Ruth on the cheek as Ruth sticks out her hand to Cody.

RUTH

How do.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - NIGHT

Pearl sits on the glider, purse beside her, handkerchief in hand. Cody gets out of his car and comes up the porch. He sits down next to her.

PEARL

You don't have to tell me, Cody.
I know I made a scene.

(pause)

He's going to marry that country cook. I knew it when I saw those five plates. Lord, right on top of buying wedding dress number two for my only daughter.

Cody reaches over and pats her hand as they continue to swing.

CODY

I guess things have to change,
sometimes.

PEARL

Cody, you know I want you three to be happy. Why, I wouldn't hold Ezra back for the world -- though I don't know what he sees in her.

The sound of crickets fill the night air. The streetlamps give everything an eerie glow.

CODY

Maybe he loves her.

PEARL

(reassuring herself)

I've never been one of those mothers who try to keep their sons home. I only want what's best for my children.

(determined)

I want Ezra to marry. Truly. You can manage on your own but Ezra needs someone. He's too good.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Cody gets up and moves to the porch railing where he leans. He looks as if he's going to say something, but doesn't.

PEARL (O.S.)
Of course, I love all my children
the same. Every bit the same.

Cody doesn't move. Just stares out into the night.

PEARL (Contd.)
Sometimes, I look at Ezra and Ruth
and I want to say, 'Who do you think
you are? Do you really believe
you'll live happily ever after? That
you're special?'

(long pause)
Cody, I was special once to someone.
I could just reach out and lay a
fingertip on his arm and he would
get all confused.

(she takes a breath)
I had the most beautiful wedding. I
had three children. And when you
were little, I was the center of
your world. Why, the moment you came
in from school, 'Mother, are you
home?' Don't you remember?

Cody does remember. We can hear the sound of the porch
glider as it moves back and forth.

PEARL (Contd.)
It's really not fair. I'm old and
walk along unnoticed, just like
anyone else.

Pearl continues to swing, alone.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pearl watches Ruth and Ezra play gin rummy on the floor, like
kids. Ruth wears jeans, combat boots, an old shirt and
smokes a little cigar. Cody enters carrying roses.

PEARL
Cody, what a surprise. We didn't
expect you.

CODY
I have a client in Laurel, needed
immediate attention.

EZRA/RUTH
Hi, Cody.

PEARL
Two weekends in a row. How wonderful.

CODY
(to Ruth)
These are for you.

Ruth looks at the flowers, then back to her game, where she draws a card from the deck.

RUTH
What are they?

CODY
Well, roses.

RUTH
Roses? This early in the year?

CODY
Greenhouse roses. I especially ordered copper to go with your hair.

RUTH
You leave my hair out of this.

Ezra comes to his brother's defense.

EZRA
Honey, don't take it wrong. Cody meant it as a compliment.

ANGLE ON PEARL

who watches, unsmiling.

CODY
See, it's my way of saying welcome. Welcome to our family.

EZRA
Cody, that was awful nice of you.

ANGLE ON RUTH

She lays down her cards and smiles at Ezra.

RUTH
Gin.

She takes a drag off her tiny cigar.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Cody stands holding the flowers. Pearl gets up and reaches for them.

PEARL

Here, let me put those in water.
Cody, I'll need the tall vase.

She takes the flowers and leads Cody to the kitchen.

INT. TULL KITCHEN - DAY

Cody goes to a cabinet and reaches the vase down from a high shelf. Pearl fills it with water, sets it on the kitchen table and starts arranging the flowers.

PEARL

I know what you're up to.

CODY

(innocent)

I beg your pardon?

PEARL

First off, you've never said, 'I beg your pardon' to me in your life.

Cody thinks about this. His mother is right. Then --

PEARL (Contd.)

I see through you like a sheet of glass. She's not your type. Ruth belongs to Ezra and she's the only thing in the whole world he's ever wanted.

CODY

You don't understand.

PEARL

This may come as a shock to you. I do understand. I may not be smart about a lot of things, but I understand my three children perfectly. I know what you're after. I see what's in your heart.

This angers Cody.

CODY

Just like God!

PEARL

Just like God.

They stand for a moment, looking at the bouquet.

EXT. CALVERT STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Cody walks alongside Ruth and Ezra. It's been raining and Ruth, in combat boots, walks right through the puddles. Carefree. Ezra plays his newest recorder while Ruth hums along. When he finishes the tune, he tucks the recorder in his pocket and circles Ruth with his arm. He pulls her close and she snuggles in.

ANGLE ON CODY

who watches all of this. His face registers both envy and revulsion.

RUTH

Tonight, let's do that Arab rice.

EZRA

And your country chicken.

RUTH

Good idea.

CODY

I guess all you two ever do is slave away in that restaurant.

RUTH

(a bit defensive)

We do other things.

CODY

(offers)

Have you ever been to New York?

ANGLE ON RUTH

Ruth shakes her head 'no,' but she appears curious.

CODY (O.S.)

I travel quite a bit, but for me, there's nowhere else I'd rather call home. The food, the shows, all the nightlife. Talk about fancy restaurants...

(then)

There's not a more romantic place anywhere, at least in my opinion.

He's placed the ingredients in the pot, and now he lets them cook. Ruth says nothing.

EZRA

(timid)

Ruth, honey. Would you like to go
someday?

RUTH

(hard to read)

Sure. Maybe on our honeymoon.

Ezra laughs. Cody is not amused.

EZRA

Honeymoon! Isn't she something?
Don't you just love her, Cody?

Ezra pulls Ruth tighter as Cody continues to watch.

INT. TULL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Pearl irons as she listens to the baseball game on the radio.
Ezra enters.

PEARL

What's wrong?

No answer.

PEARL (Contd.)

Ezra? Why aren't you at work?

EZRA

Mom, it's Cody.

PEARL

(clutching her heart)

Cody...

EZRA

(distraught)

He's gone off to get married.

PEARL

(relieved)

Oh, married. I thought something
terrible had happened.

(then)

Who to?

EZRA
(choked up)
To Ruth.

PEARL
Your Ruth?!

EZRA
My Ruth.

Pearl turns off the iron and the radio.

PEARL
Oh, sweetheart. It's your brother
just being mean.

EZRA
(despairing)
What does it matter why he did it.
He stole her away.

PEARL
(offers)
If she could be stolen, honey...why
you don't want her anyhow.

ANGLE ON EZRA

stricken. He starts to cry. Moves toward his mother, who takes hold of him.

CLOSE ON PEARL

as she remembers the loss of Beck.

INT. BALTIMORE TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Ruth, in a navy blue suit, walks unsteadily on high-heeled sandals. Her hair is frizzier than usual, her makeup smeared. She looks as if she's been crying.

ANGLE ON CODY

who walks beside her and carries a large suitcase. He leads Ruth to a bench and sits her down.

CODY
Are you all right? You're sure
you want to go through with this.

Ruth nods.

CODY (Contd.)
Okay. I'll get the tickets.

He walks to a ticket window and gets in line. The line moves slowly and Cody, as usual, is impatient.

ANOTHER ANGLE

A young woman with a child in front of him turns to survey the line. She smiles at Cody.

JANE
Cody Tull?
(excited)
It is Cody Tull.

CODY
Uh, yes.

JANE
I'm Jane Razzano. Remember me?

CODY
Oh, Jane. Well, good to see you.
And this is your little girl?

JANE
Say hello to Mr. Tull, Margo.
Mr. Tull and Mommy used to go to school together.

MARGO
Hi.

CODY
So, you're married...

JANE
(laughs)
Remember the day I came to visit you uninvited? I had such a crush on you. Lord, I made a total fool of myself.

Cody thinks back, remembers.

CODY
You played a game of checkers with Ezra.

JANE
Ezra?

CODY

My brother.

JANE

You had a brother?

CODY

I certainly did. Do. You played checkers with him all afternoon.

Jane tries her best to recollect, but can't.

JANE

That's funny. I remember everything about you...like it was yesterday. But I don't remember your having a brother.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The line moves forward and before Cody can answer, Jane is at the window. She buys her ticket, takes Margo's hand, waves to Cody and goes off into the crowd.

ANGLE ON CODY

who is next. He hesitates, starts to turn away, but --

RUTH

is walking toward him, still wobbly on the high heels. Her hair is now combed, her makeup repaired. She calls to him, jokingly.

RUTH

I hope to get the knack of these things before long.

She smiles.

CODY

You don't have to wear them, you know.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ruth joins Cody at the window as he gets one final look at Jane, who disappears with her daughter through the door to a gate.

RUTH

Oh, I surely do.
(nudges him)
Cody, it's your turn.

As Cody turns back to the window and buys the tickets --

RUTH (Contd.)
I can hardly wait to get on the
train. Do you think they'll have
an eating car?

EXT. ROUTE 40 - "SEPTEMBER, 1978" - LATE MORNING

Fifteen years later. A large tractor trailer moves south at a rapid pace.

VARIOUS ANGLES

as the semi heads into Baltimore, it slows and eventually comes to a stop along the shoulder of the road. A young boy, about fourteen, climbs down from the passenger side and waves to the driver, who heads back onto the highway.

ANGLE ON BOY

who walks a way before putting his thumb out for a ride. Soon, an elderly woman picks him up in an Oldsmobile.

EXT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - EARLY AFTERNOON

The Oldsmobile stops in front and the boy, Luke, gets out. He looks the way Cody did at the same age. He's eager to say goodbye, but the driver continues talking.

DRIVER
Are you going to be all right?
You're sure your folks are inside?

LUKE
Yes, I am.

DRIVER
You'd better tell them it's not safe
for a boy to be hitchhiking.

LUKE
Yes, Ma'am. I appreciate your giving
me a ride.

Luke turns and walks to the front door. It's locked.

DRIVER
(worried)
What's the trouble?

LUKE

I forgot. I have to use the kitchen door.

Luke walks toward the rear of the building, then turns back to wave as the car starts up.

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - EARLY AFTERNOON

Workers dart about, preparing for the evening business. Luke stands in the doorway, unnoticed. He's almost forgotten why he came -- then he sees Ezra.

ANGLE ON EZRA

Luke watches as Ezra, now forty-five, cuts biscuits. His shirt sleeves are rolled up and a spotless white apron hangs around his waist. After a moment, Luke crosses to him and stands, waiting to be recognized.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Eventually, Ezra glances up, says hi, and goes back to his work.

LUKE

squares his shoulders, works up some nerve.

LUKE

I'd like a job.

Ezra looks up again and reaches for a towel to wipe his hands.

EZRA

Luke? It's Cody's Luke, isn't it?

LUKE

How'd you guess?

EZRA

Why, you do your shoulders just the way Cody does. Where is he? Back at the house?

Luke looks down at the floor.

LUKE

I'm here on my own.

EZRA

Has something happened to him?
Where's your mom?

LUKE

In New York. I left them there.
(faces Ezra)
I ran away. I didn't plan to...
but he said...

ANGLE ON EZRA

who waits for Luke to finish. When he doesn't, Ezra removes his apron, places it on a hook and takes Luke's arm. They head toward the door.

EZRA

I know. When we were kids, sometimes I got so mad at Cody, I could just choke him. But I knew he didn't really mean it. He's my only brother. He wouldn't hurt you for the world.

They exit.

INT. TULL KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

The kitchen is now an odd blend of old and new. A twenty-year-old coffee percolator sits beside a microwave oven. The table and chairs contrast with the double-door refrigerator.

CLOSE ON WALL PHONE

The receiver is out of its cradle. Pearl is on the phone with Cody.

PEARL (O.S.)

Now, Cody, I'm sitting here looking straight at him and he's perfectly all right.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Luke sits at the kitchen table with a tall glass of milk and a plate of cookies. We get a closer look at Pearl. She's now seventy-nine, although the drive is still there.

PEARL (Contd.)

I hope you'll let him stay a while.
(pause)
Police! Call them right back.
You're making a lot of fuss over nothing.

CLOSE ON LUKE

who rolls his eyes. This is what he lives with every day.

PEARL (O.S.)

He just thumbed a ride to the
restaurant, and Ezra brought him
home.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Pearl stops talking. Luke imagines he can hear his father
yelling.

PEARL (Contd.)

All right, Cody. All right. I
understand.

Pearl hangs up without a goodbye and turns to her grandson.

PEARL (Contd.)

They'll be here as soon as they can.
Your father wants to come get you
right now.

Great.

INT. TULL DINING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Pearl and Luke sit at the dining room table with albums,
loose photos, news clippings, etc., spread out.

PEARL

And this is my Uncle Seward, and
my Aunt Bessie. They died a year
apart from one another, back in
1944. My uncle owned the first
car ever in Prince Georges County.

LUKE

They look like nice people.

PEARL

They were. I lived with them
from when I was about your age
until I got married.

Luke turns the album pages.

LUKE

Who's this?

PEARL

That was my Daddy. He passed away when I was just a baby.

(point to other photo)

This is, was, my brother. I never knew him because he died before I was even born.

More pages. Then --

PEARL (Contd.)

Luke, look here. This is your dad. Two years old and so handsome. Even then.

She laughs. Luke looks at the picture quickly and turns the page. He stops and points to another picture.

LUKE

Who's this?

PEARL

(leans in closer)

Why, that's Cody teaching Ezra to ride a bicycle.

LUKE

Dad said I looked like Ezra.

CLOSE ON PEARL

She realizes why Luke ran away.

PEARL

Why, you're the spitting image of your father. Why would Cody say such a thing?

ANGLE ON LUKE

who studies the photo intently and then, content, continues to turn the pages. He stops when he sees a small picture which has been placed alone on a large page.

CLOSE ON PHOTOGRAPH

A very pretty young woman, circa. 1905.

LUKE (O.S.)

She's pretty.

PEARL (O.S.)

That was my mother.

BACK TO SCENE

Pearl's eyes well up. Luke is still looking at the picture.

LUKE

When did she pass away?

PEARL

(hesitates)

I...don't know.

Luke is silent. He slowly closes the album. After a long moment --

PEARL (Contd.)

I wish your dad would let you come visit more often.

(she smiles)

We could go see the Orioles and I could have you all to myself.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM - EVENING

A while later. Cody and Ruth have arrived. Ruth, now thirty-seven, wears an expensive outfit, all designer labels showing, but still finds it hard to walk on high heels. She puts her arms around Luke, half-crying, smoothing his hair.

RUTH

Luke!

ANGLE ON CODY

now forty-eight, stands at the front door. Handsome as ever.

CODY

(to Luke)

May I ask what you thought you were up to. Your mother's been beside herself.

ANGLE ON RUTH

who looks over her son's shoulder toward Pearl.

RUTH

We almost lost our minds. I kept looking out the same front window at the same sidewalk. Empty. You just don't know.

PEARL

(quietly)
I do know.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The front door opens. Ezra has returned early from the restaurant.

EZRA

Cody, Ruth. Good to see you.

Ruth still stands with her arms around Luke.

RUTH

Oh, Luke, sweetheart, didn't you think you'd be missed?

ANGLE ON PEARL

who motions for everyone to sit down.

PEARL

How about some iced tea?

Nobody moves.

CODY

No, we've got to start back. It's a four-hour drive.

Cody takes Ruth's arm to get her moving. She shrugs it off and goes to a chair and sits down.

RUTH

Luke, your father insisted on driving all the way himself. And too fast.

PEARL

Why not stay the night and start fresh in the morning?

EZRA

We could still have a nice dinner at the restaurant.

(then)

There are lots of new dishes to try.

Cody looks at Ruth and then at Ezra.

CODY

I get more than enough new dishes
at home. Why Ruth bothers, I'll
never know.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ruth gets up, signals Luke to join her and starts for the door.

PEARL

Well, maybe you will come for
Thanksgiving.

EZRA

(sincere)

We'll have a big family dinner at
the restaurant. Jenny, Joe and all
the kids...

CODY

Family dinner. I'm not even related
to half those kids. Besides, I don't
know where we'll be.

PEARL

There's always an airplane.

LUKE

Please, Dad. Couldn't we? I miss
seeing Grandma. And Uncle Ezra and
Aunt Jenny.

Cody looks directly at his son. Sees how much this means to him.

CODY

Well, I'll try.

(then)

Ruth, you got everything? Bye,
Mother. So long, Ezra. I'll be
in touch.

Luke gives his grandmother one final hug, then follows Cody and Ruth, who have already gone out the front door.

PEARL'S AND EZRA'S POV - THE STREET

They stand in the doorway and watch as Cody and Luke get in the front seat of Cody's newest Mercedes-Benz and Ruth gets in the back.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - "AUTUMN, 1981" - DAY

Three years later. Leaves blow around the glider on the porch. The neighborhood is quiet.

INT. TULL DINING ROOM - DAY

Ezra, forty-eight, is carrying his eighty-two-year-old mother down the stairs. He heads toward her bed, which, along with other furniture, has been moved to the dining room.

PEARL

(as he carries her)

Be sure you get everything out of
my vanity. I want it all where
I can see it.

EZRA

Of course, Mother.

He places Pearl down on her bed and goes back upstairs to retrieve the other things.

CLOSER ON PEARL

as she fumbles to adjust a pillow, it is evident she has gone blind. However, although she may have shrunk and aged, her true, interior self is still larger than life. Determined, she straightens herself out and waits for her son to come back. After a moment, the front door slams.

JENNY (O.S.)

Mother, where are you?

PEARL

Where else would I be?

ANGLE ON JENNY

who comes in and stops immediately when she sees her mother in bed in the dining room. At forty-six, Jenny is still quite beautiful but does nothing to fix herself up. She stares for a moment at Pearl before speaking.

JENNY (Contd.)

What are you doing in the dining room?
And where's Ezra?

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra reappears carrying his mother's belongings.

EZRA

(to Pearl)

You saved newspaper clips about the
Tanner Corporation?

PEARL

I said bring my belongings, not look
at them.

JENNY

I can't believe it. I come over and
find everything's falling apart.

PEARL

(in Jenny's direction)

Jenny, did you bring the children?

JENNY

No, not this time. They're home
with Joe. Mother, how are you
feeling?

Jenny leans in to kiss her mother. She places a hand on her
forehead.

PEARL

I'm fine. Is Cody here, too?

EZRA

No, Mother.

JENNY

(rises)

Mother, you're burning up. I'm
going to call an ambulance.

ANGLE ON EZRA

who steps between Pearl and Jenny.

EZRA

She won't go to the hospital. Dr.
Vincent said we could wait.

JENNY

That quack!

PEARL

Jenny! Besides, I feel fine.

ANOTHER ANGLE

favoring all three. Jenny looks to Ezra for support. He shrugs.

PEARL (Contd.)
(still in charge)
It was nice of you to come by,
Jenny.

JENNY
It's just that I worry about you.
You're the only mother I have.

PEARL
(almost to herself)
You should have got an extra.

Pearl closes her eyes. Jenny, resigned, looks at her mother again and then goes toward the door.

JENNY
(to Ezra)
I'll look in later. Call me if you
need me.

PEARL
(answers for Ezra)
Yes, Doctor.

Ezra nods. Jenny exits.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra has a seat in the armchair beside Pearl's bed.

EXT. CALVERT STREET - "WINTER, 1981" - AFTERNOON

Favoring the Tull house. It is a blustery day. Snow has been plowed to the sides of the street.

PEARL (O.S.)
Money doesn't grow on trees.

INT. TULL DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Ezra sits by Pearl's bed. A cup of tea rests on the table. He is dozing. Pearl's in bed with her eyes closed.

PEARL (Contd.)
Did you hear me?

EZRA
(awakening)
What, Mother?

PEARL
But I should have let you stay home
to pick it.

Ezra stands and leans over the bed to better hear what his mother is saying.

PEARL (Contd.)
Shouldn't you get back to the
restaurant? You're like a mother
hen about that place.

Ezra doesn't answer as he pats Pearl's hand.

PEARL (Contd.)
Ezra?

EZRA
Yes, Mother?

PEARL
Where is my address book?

EZRA
(reassuring)
Right here. On the table.

PEARL
Pay attention, Ezra. I want everybody
in it invited to my funeral.

Ezra is silent. Then --

EZRA
Funeral! You're not going to die.

PEARL
(matter-of-fact)
No, of course not. I have children.

EZRA
Let's not talk about it.

The two are quiet for a long moment. The wind rattles the windows slightly.

PEARL
Don't forget. The people in my
address book.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICES - LOBBY - DAY

This is a partnership of perhaps a dozen pediatricians. An assortment of children wait for their appointments, playing with an array of toys which are scattered about the lobby.

INT. JENNY'S OFFICE - DAY

Jenny is with a "patient," her attractive twenty-one-year-old stepdaughter, Elizabeth.

JENNY

Come on, say 'aah.' The check-up's on the house.

ELIZABETH

I'm not feeling so bad anymore.
I think the vitamins worked.

JENNY

I remember college. You probably have mono.

(then)

Open.

Elizabeth complies. Jenny looks down her throat.

JENNY (Contd.)

Not good, but not bad considering you're at Georgetown.

She starts to write a prescription. Elizabeth's sense of humor has momentarily disappeared.

ELIZABETH

I guess the ski trip is out.

JENNY

(smiles)

Having a doctor for a stepmother is a real treat, huh?

Jenny's private line buzzes. She moves to the phone and as she answers --

ELIZABETH

You could have some better toys out there.

ANGLE ON JENNY

on the phone.

JENNY
Ezra...what is it?

We hold on Jenny. Something has happened.

EXT. NEW JERSEY MARSH - DAY

We follow several geese as they come within twenty feet of the tree tops. Then we hear the blast from a shotgun. The geese scatter.

REVERSE ON LUKE

holding a smoking gun and wearing a down jacket. Cody takes the gun from him.

CODY
I told you to wait. They would have come lower. Now they're gone.

LUKE
Sorry.

ANOTHER ANGLE

We get a better look at the two -- Luke is now seventeen, a spitting image of his father, with strong traces of Beck. Cody, at fifty-one, looks like your typical goose-hunting businessman. The right clothes, the right equipment, the lack of patience.

CODY
(resigned)
Come on, let's head over to North Point. Maybe catch some action there.

LUKE
Okay.

Luke is still sheepish. Cody, with as much emotion as he can muster, mumbles --

CODY
Don't worry. No problem.

Luke relaxes.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Off in the distance we hear a man shout, but can't make out what he's saying.

CODY

Who's that idiot? The birds
will never come back now.

As the man comes closer, we can hear that he is yelling
somebody's name.

MAN

Mr. Cody Tull! Mr. Cody Tull!

ANGLE ON CODY

who wonders what this is all about. He shrugs, looks at his
son.

EXT. CALVERT STREET - BALTIMORE - MORNING

It is mid-morning on a sunny day. A well-maintained ten-year-old Buick drives slowly down the street past the row houses. They are all slightly different. One has dozens of roses struggling in the tiny front yard. In another, an illuminated Madonna glows in the parlor window.

EXT. TULL HOUSE - MORNING

The Buick comes to a stop across the street from Pearl Tull's house, which has a bow of mourner's ribbon on the front door. Parked in front of this house is a black stretch limousine with a chauffeur at the wheel.

ANGLE ON BUICK

as its driver, Beck Tull, gets out of his car. He is a trim white-haired gentleman of seventy-six in an old-fashioned and slightly gangsterish pin-striped suit.

VARIOUS ANGLES

He starts to cross the street but suddenly the front door of the house opens and Cody, handsome and well-dressed, comes out followed by Jenny, her husband Joe and a gaggle of children. Bringing up the rear are a still too-thin Ruth, now forty with the copper fading from her hair, and Luke. All are dressed in dark clothes.

ANGLE ON BECK

who hesitates as they reach their limousine.

ANGLE ON LIMOUSINE

The chauffeur gets out, comes around and opens the rear door. Everyone gets in, the children on the jump seats. Cody and Luke are in front with Luke next to the driver. The limousine starts off.

BECK TULL

returns to his car and follows the limousine down the street -- a two-car funeral procession.

EXT. BALTIMORE STREETS - "JANUARY, 1982" - MORNING

The cars drive through drab Baltimore streets, past Linsey's Candy & Tobacco, Bobbi Jo's Barbecue with dusty artificial greenery on either side of the entrance. As they turn the last corner, they pass a high school, built circa 1930's.

EXT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - MORNING

The limousine comes to a stop in front where Ezra, forty-eight, is waiting. He wears a loose-fitting khaki suit which seems inappropriate for a funeral. There is a space between his collar and the knot of his tie. He looks his usual benign self, if a bit sadder.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra opens the back door of the limousine and starts to slide in next to Ruth. At the same instant, Cody opens the front door, gets out and directs Luke.

CODY

Son, get in back. Ezra, there's room in front.

Luke, teary-eyed, gets in next to Ruth who puts her arm around him as the limousine starts up. The Buick follows.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

The cars pull up in front of the First Baptist Church.

ANGLE ON ENTRANCE

On the announcement board in front is "Pearl Tull Service, 11:00 a.m. -- and they shall call Her blessed."

Everyone gets out of the limousine and starts up the church steps, with Ezra and Cody bringing up the rear. An elderly lady stops Ezra to murmur condolences.

ELDERLY LADY
So sorry to hear about your mother.

EZRA
Thank you for coming.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Cody waits impatiently for Ezra, he sees Beck, who has parked a little ways back of the limousine. Suddenly he recognizes who it is and turns angrily to Ezra.

CODY
(in a loud voice)
For God's sake. Who the hell invited him?

EZRA
(quietly)
I did. Mother asked me to invite everyone in her address book to her funeral. And there it was under 'T' -- Beck Tull.

CODY
What did you say?

EZRA
I said, 'Hello, this is Ezra. Mother has died and her funeral is Monday at eleven.'

ANGLE ON CHURCH STEPS

Beck has now reached them. He stops one step below.

BECK
Hello Boys. It's your father speaking.

Jenny comes down the stairs and stops.

JENNY
Cody, what's wrong?

CODY
(to Jenny)
Your brother went and asked our father to the funeral.

EZRA
Mother told me to.

JENNY
(laughing)
Typical Pearl.

BECK

And this must be Jenny. Last time I set eyes on you, you were just about nine. Your favorite song was Mairzy Doats.

JENNY

(taking Beck's arm)

Everyone's waiting. We'll have a chance to visit after the service.

She leads him up the stairs. After a moment, Ezra and Cody follow.

CODY

Damnit. After what he did, he doesn't belong.

The four of them disappear into the church.

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - DAY

After Pearl's funeral. The place is empty except for one long table covered in white linen and set with crystal and china. Fifteen places including a high chair. Every seat taken. A waitress hovers.

EZRA

So, what do you think of this wine, Dad?

ANGLE ON BECK

holding the wine glass. He's at the head of the table.

BECK

Oh, I'm not much for wine, son. I don't drink anything that has to breathe. A little shot of bourbon is more my style.

THE OTHERS

try to observe Beck without looking obvious. It's been thirty-seven years since he left.

EZRA

How's the soup? It's eggplant.

ANGLE ON BECK

who has been looking at all the children.

BECK

What?

EZRA

The soup is one of our specialties.
You'll love it.

Beck carefully tastes it. Then he looks around the restaurant and back to Ezra.

BECK

This is some fancy operation.

ANGLE ON CODY

who is having trouble with the whole situation. No one else knows what to say.

EZRA

Are you still with the Tanner Corporation?

BECK

looks at the children in disbelief.

BECK

No, no, I'm retired. I put in forty-one years of service. They gave me a wonderful banquet and this pocket watch.

(pause)

To tell the truth, I miss it. I try to keep busy. Play cards with a few of my buddies at the hotel.

(then)

And I got a lady friend I see. No disrespect to your mother, but Claudette's a real fine woman. Even so, I still miss the action. You know what I mean, Cody.

Cody looks up.

CODY

I don't know what you mean.

Ezra changes the subject.

EZRA

Dad, did you know that Cody is an efficiency expert?

BECK

What's that?

Cody doesn't answer.

EZRA

He's a time-study man. Checks out factories and tells them what to do. He's one of the very best. Always getting written up.

BECK

(turns to Cody)
Is that so? Well, that's fine.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Beck turns from Cody and looks around the table.

BECK (Contd.)

This is some crowd. Just like on TV. A big happy family.

Finally, Cody speaks.

CODY

Don't let them fool you. Why, not more than two or three of these kids are even related to you. The rest are Joe's by a previous wife.

ANGLE ON JENNY

who covers with a smile.

JENNY

We're what you call a blended family.

JOE

It was the only way I could be sure I had a doctor who made house calls.

Joe looks toward his wife lovingly.

ANGLE ON BECKY

now twenty-one, she appears a bit nervous.

BECKY

Hi, Grandpa. I'm Becky. Jenny's my mother.

BECK

(moved)
Well, hello.

ANGLE ON CODY

who can't stand it anymore. He pushes his plate away and looks at Beck.

CODY

I've got this partner, Sloan. A bachelor all his life. Last year, Sloan ran into Sally, an old girlfriend. She was celebrating her little daughter's birthday, and Sloan, just to be polite, asked, 'Which birthday is it?' And when Sally told him, it rang a bell. He said, 'Why, she must be mine.' And Sally just looked at him and said, 'Yes, she is, as a matter of fact.'

ANGLE ON BECK

who thinks about this.

BECK

How strange.

CODY

leans in and explains.

CODY

Not at all. Sloan doesn't count. He wasn't part of the family. Not a real father.

ANGLE ON BECK

who is very uncomfortable. Flustered.

ANOTHER ANGLE

All sit silently. Then, at the other end of the table, something crashes to the floor.

THE BABY

starts crying. Both Jenny and one of her stepdaughters (the baby's mother) get up and go to the high chair. Others get up to see what fell off the table.

JOE

It was just a serving spoon, no
big deal.

JENNY

(to stepdaughter)

Let me have her. She's all right.

Jenny picks up the baby who immediately stops crying.
Everyone returns to their seats.

ANGLE ON BECK'S CHAIR

which is empty. A napkin is discarded on his plate.

EZRA

Dad is gone!

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra gets up and goes to the front door. He opens it and looks out. Shakes his head and comes back to the table.

EZRA

(frantic)

Come on, Cody. We can find him,
bring him back and take up where
we left off.

Ezra starts for the front door. Cody remains seated.

CODY

Or, we could finish the family
dinner without him. That's always
a possibility.

EZRA

(mad)

Fine. Do what you want.

Ezra grabs his coat and goes out the door.

CODY

(calls after him)

Good hunting.

ANGLE ON TABLE

Everybody slowly begins to eat, all except Luke. Cody pours himself another glass of wine and starts to drink. Luke is staring right at him. Cody puts down the glass.

CODY (Contd.)
Maybe I'll check on how Ezra is
doing.

Luke is relieved. Cody pushes back his chair, gets his coat and exits.

EXT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - DAY

Cody stands in front of the restaurant. Ezra is nowhere to be found. After a moment, Cody makes his decision and heads east through an alleyway.

EXT. BUSHNELL STREET - DAY

Cody comes out of the alley and looks around. No one is out in this cold. He's about to turn around when he sees a puff of smoke coming from the entrance of a nearby building.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Cody approaches the building and sees his father sitting on the front steps, smoking a pipe. He walks up to him.

CODY
Anything wrong?

BECK
I just needed some air.
(then)
Sorry to eat and run, but Claudette will be expecting me. You know how women are. She depends on me.

Beck takes another puff on his pipe.

CODY
So did we. We were just kids. You turned your back on us.

BECK
But Pearl...

CODY
She was a witch! You left us in her clutches.

Beck stares past Cody at a passing car. Cody sits down beside Beck on the steps.

BECK

At first, I made your mother very happy. She thought I was so wonderful. Everything was perfect.

(remembers)

You ought to have seen her face when I walked into a room. I could do no wrong...

CODY

(bitterly)

And then...?

BECK

She used up my good points.

Cody doesn't understand.

BECK (Contd.)

I guess she saw my faults. No matter how hard I tried...I was on the road too much, I didn't help with you kids, I didn't get ahead in my work, I drank too much, I talked wrong, ate wrong, even drove the car wrong.

Beck stops, takes a breath. He has been waiting thirty-seven years to explain.

BECK (Contd.)

Do you remember the archery set?

CODY

(soft)

Yes.

BECK

It was a good idea. Set up a target and shoot off some arrows. First, Pearl says it's too expensive. Jenny says it's too cold -- this was in August. And then you and Ezra get in some kind of fight, shoot off an arrow and wing your mother. A disaster. A typical disaster.

CODY

It was my fault you left?

BECK

(not at all)

It was the last straw. Everything I did turned out wrong. All at once, not even knowing I'd do it, I said, 'Pearl, I'm leaving.' I packed a bag and walked out that night.

Cody has taken this all in. Then --

CODY

You walked out on your own children. We loved you and needed you. We needed you to tell us things, to teach us. Christ, every Friday we kept hoping, praying, that you would come through the door.

A bus heads slowly down the street. Two kids on bicycles ride by, oblivious to Cody and Beck.

BECK

I almost did. One time, maybe two or three years later, I was passing through Baltimore and parked across the street, waiting.

(pause)

You came out of the house. I didn't even know you anymore. Figured you'd seen me, but instead you picked up the evening paper.

CODY

And you didn't come in.

BECK

No. Because I saw that when you picked it up, you flipped it in the air and caught it.

(pause)

I knew you could live without me. I knew that Pearl could manage. And I was right.

Beck re-lights his pipe. Cody is speechless.

BECK (Contd.)

Jenny's a doctor. Ezra owns a fancy restaurant. And you, an expert. Own your own company. I'm proud of you. You all turned out fine.

(then)

She did it.

CODY

She sure did. God rest her soul.

There is a long silence. Then, Cody turns to his father.

CODY (Contd.)

How come you never remarried.

Beck starts to laugh. Cody doesn't understand.

BECK

I saw a woman a few years after Pearl. Then another...and so on. Always end up the same. I figured getting a divorce would only get me in more trouble.

(thinks)

I'd have been married ten times over if I did that. No, Pearl was the only wife for me.

(then)

What will happen now that she's gone?

CODY

I don't know. But I don't think we should wait another thirty-seven years to find out.

BECK

Not a very efficient use of time.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra is heading down the street. He's spotted them.

CODY

Ezra's found us. Let's go finish dinner.

Cody helps Beck to his feet and takes his elbow. They slowly walk toward Ezra, meeting eventually in the middle of the empty street.

EZRA
You guys ready for dessert?

Cody smiles at his brother -- the resentment is gone.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra and Cody, with Beck between them, turn the corner on to Bushnell Street and walk toward the restaurant.

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT - DAY

There is not an empty seat. Luke smiles at Cody. A genuine family dinner.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ezra lifts a glass and the others follow.

EZRA
I would like to propose a toast.

The others raise their glasses and listen.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODBINE ROAD HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Pearl works in her garden on the day she met Beck. He is coming toward her, flowers in hand.

EZRA (V.O.)
To Pearl Tull.

OTHERS (V.O.)
To Pearl. Amen. To Mom.

PEARL (V.O.)
This afternoon, I went out behind the house to weed. I was kneeling in the dirt with my pinafore a mess and the perspiration rolling down my back.

Beck hands Pearl the flowers. She looks up at him as the two begin to talk.

PEARL (V.O.)

A bottle fly was buzzing and I
could hear the Bedloe girl practicing
her scales. I was kneeling on such
a beautiful little planet. I was
absolutely happy. Whatever else
happens, I had this one moment.

FADE OUT.

THE END